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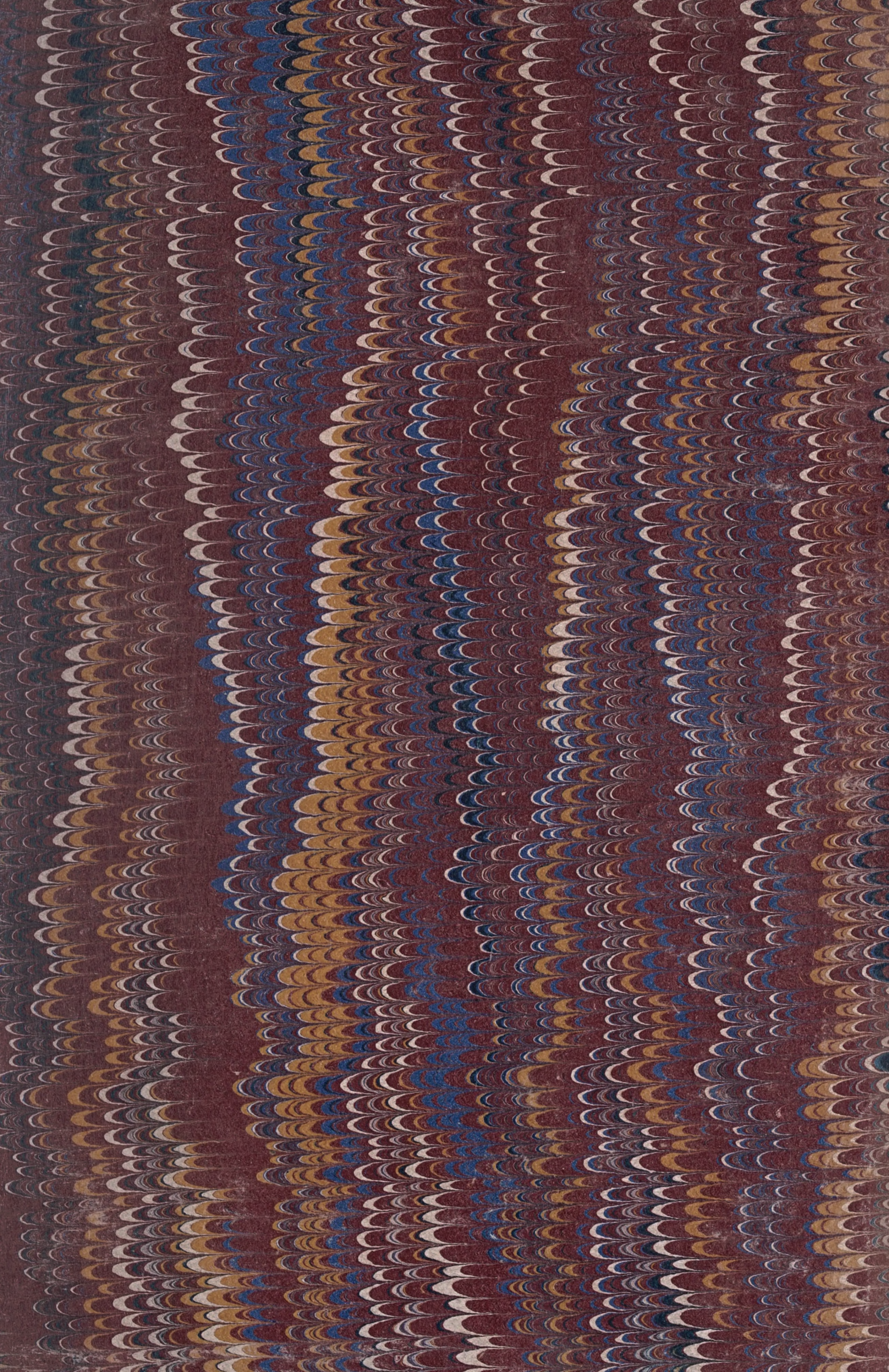
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By MRS. ANNIE EDWARDS.

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A Ballroom Repentance.

BY

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A BALLROOM REPENTANCE.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOLL TRIBE, GENERALLY.

“A PAIR of portmanteaus and a shabby violin-case.”

Lake Lemman sleeps five hundred feet below; a plain of sapphire, lighted up by gleams of emerald, by fitful opal shafts, that melt, Juraward, into the crystalline air depths of sunset. In the middle distance a solitary lateen sail cleaves the blue. The opposite Savoy mountains, though August does but wane, are powdered with fresh-fallen snow. The swallows, already thinking of Africa, are trying their wings in figures of eight overhead. Oleanders, magnolias, and standard roses make sweet the garden of a certain Grand Hotel Scherer that towers among chestnut avenues and sweeps of vineyard high above Clarens. And the voice of Mrs. Scipio Leonidas P. Briggs breaks the stillness.

A pleasant voice, despite its sing-song drawl, a voice suggestive of hammock swinging, negro fly-flappers, starlit flirtations, and every insidious mixture of ice and alcohol that it has entered into the heart of South American man to concoct.

“My word, yes! That was about the figure of Mrs. and Miss Dormer’s luggage. A pair of portmanteaus and a shabby violin-case. My maid watched them as they rode round from the cars. I surmise their dresses are innocent of Worth or La Ferriere. I surmise their dresses just came out of some London dry-goods store. I spent a week in London, last spring,” goes on Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, mournfully, “and the fog so affected my dyspepsia I never got round to see the parks but once. That once was enough.

My dear, there wasn't a well-toileted woman there, except, of course, some of our people from home and a few Parisians. A gentleman friend of mine from New York State remarked to me, 'The aboriginal ladies we see around us do not dress. They clothe themselves. And as for their beauty—I just guess,' he observed, 'they look strong. Solidly built up of beef and beer. Calculated to ride fox-chasing, and to resist the vicissitudes of wind and rain. Climate,' my friend added, 'is not a word for this longitude. You get a deal of mixed weather, mostly bad, in England. Climate there is none.'"

Mrs. Colonel Scipio Leonidas P. Briggs—I love to register the lady's full title, although she, herself, will not unfrequently drop the final monosyllable—is a native of South Carolina, and despite her fragile looks is interviewing Europe with a will and thoroughness that might put the whole strong-minded sisterhood of Britain to the blush.

The colonel—so Mrs. Scipio Leonidas confesses when she has occasion to speak of her absent lord—is having a beautiful time over the other side. Oh my, yes! a lovely time. He is quite an unselfish man, this accommodating colonel; a pattern husband. They both hold emancipated ideas of the domesticities, Mrs. Scipio will tell you, within five minutes of your introduction to her. The colonel don't want her to cross back till she has swallowed all the different waters of the Continent. It's the state of her gastric organs that's her trouble, and none of the physicians in Europe can fix her up. Homburg, Carlsbad, Vichy, she has tried them all. Her life has been spent going round the mineral baths two years and more, and she is right down fagged and finished in consequence. My dear, yes! just look at her. And Mrs. Leonidas will languidly extend a taper, diamonded slip of a hand for your inspection. What is she? Don't deceive her. She is a sallow, dyspeptic bundle of nerves, now, isn't she?

She is a fine-featured colorless invalid, of two- or three-and-thirty, with large restless overbrilliant eyes, the foot (inadvertently, she shows it often) of a child, and the grace—of a South American. What simile could be found to express as much? An invalid, more than half imaginary, precariously existing on a regimen of French novels, rich dishes, and mineral waters. A creature of the great Doll tribe, unquestionably; dressed, jeweled, satin-slippered,

here among Swiss mountains, as she was last spring in Paris or will be next winter at Naples or Florence; and still, a doll with a brain. In England we have dolls enow. Wax dolls, wooden dolls, porcelain dolls, dolls that open and shut their eyes, that speak, sing, dance, some, even, that kneel. The doll with a brain is of foreign manufacture, chiefly American or French. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas has mixed in the vividest circles of Boston and New York, is brimful of advanced social theories, somewhat crude and garish, it may be, if you sift them finely; knows Italy like a guide-book, and is as well versed in recent Paris gossip of church, senate, salon, and greenroom, as a genuine Parisian.

Dinner is her weakness, dress her passion. She is of an organization so sensitive that the neighborhood of a cat, the odor of certain flowers will cause her to faint. And she has been known to travel from Biarritz to Madrid in the dog-days in order to be present at a bull-fight.

"Yes, a pair of portmanteaus and a shabby violin-case." So the lady resumes, for the benefit of such loungers as are drinking after-dinner coffee in the hotel garden. "And Mrs. Dormer, one of your aristocrats, no doubt, a duke's daughter, or baronet's widow, or earl's second cousin, does not condescend to show in the public parlors." It is a boast of Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs that she cares not enough for lineage to distinguish one English title from the other. Yet, I suspect, if she should cross his path, the society of a living duke, or baronet, or even of an earl's second cousin, would not be distasteful to her. "Surely you can furnish us with chapter and verse out of the Peerage, Mrs. Skelton. *Who* are the owners of the portmanteaus and violin-case that they should give themselves airs when they travel round these lakes?"

"Dormer—Dormer," repeats the personage addressed as Mrs. Skelton. "Dian, my love, have we not heard that name before? yes—I recollect!" And the speaker draws a wisp of red shawl virtuously around her thin angular shoulders. "It will be found, no doubt, that this misguided young Farintyre, whom everybody pities, is in attendance on them. Miss Joyce Dormer's latest victim."

"And future husband?" asks Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, with awakening interest.

"Ah, that is a very different matter. I knew the Dormers last winter, in Nice—by sight only. In my position,

my dear Mrs. Scipio, no gentleman of the party, it is an actual duty to weed one's traveling acquaintance, to keep clear if possible of scandal. My girls, you see, are so unsophisticated! Pansy and Dian, until we came abroad, never mixed in any but the best circles of Cathedral society, and our giddy little Aurora, of course, was still in the school-room."

A young English lad, tall, bronzed, Oxford-suited, stands, enjoying his after-dinner cigarette, and the view of lake and mountain, at some paces distant from these ladies. At the touching reference to our little Aurora's giddiness, a smile, somewhat doubtful in its import, hovers around the corners of his lips.

"Miss Aurora Skelton is not exactly what in our American circles we should call a Bud. I should judge Miss Aurora to be near upon my own time of life?"

The tone of Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs is friendly. She smiles like one who makes an amiable, but somewhat rose-colored concession to human weakness. Yet does her voice imply a query.

Aurora's mamma, too wary a veteran to be provoked to battle on so dangerous a field as age, changes the subject deftly.

She is a sharp, chirruping, altogether terrible little old woman, this Mrs. Skelton; an old woman, dressed in the extreme of youthful mode, yet, withal, so patched, so powdered, so wizened, so shriveled, she looks as though she must fall to pieces at a touch. For a short half hour you might judge her, by reason of her frivolity, to be harmless. Mention her in any of the Riviera pensions that are her winter haunts, if you would know the depth of emotion her name is capable of inspiring in the breast of unwedded and unguarded man! Persistent and metallic is Mrs. Skelton's voice; mirthless her jerky laughter. In lieu of honest gray hairs, a small pink cap is perched on the summit of her head. Her hollow cheeks are rouged; her smile is fixed upon the very newest principles and warranted; a smile glistening, adamant as the longest established firm in Hanover Square can supply. She is a very libel on old age; a sermon—not in stones, but paste, and whose text is the rottenness and vanity of all human desire! Around her, in sallow greens, brick-dust crimsons, and dull golds,

are grouped a trio of elderly girls, each in an attitude, her daughters.

“My children are not handsome, according to rule,” the veteran will allow, ingenuously. “As regards feature, indeed, they take after the prebendary’s family rather than my own.” This absent, never-appearing prebendary is a somewhat dark subject, brought forward only when the best Cathedral society fails of effect, as a garnish to Mrs. Skelton’s tallest talk. “But they are the delight of artists, each in their different *genre*. ‘The Miss Skeltons are more than beautiful,’ the great Thoreau said to me when we were last in London. ‘The Miss Skeltons are deliciously, quaintly picturesque.’”

So to the great Thoreau’s charge, perhaps, may be set down the golds, greens, and crimsons of which we have spoken.

The eldest, Pansy, is florid, stout, short, and in her thirtieth year. Pansy dresses in chintz, with flame-colored “housewife” pinafores, wears her hair in a tangle above a pair of beetling brows, knits socks for the poor, even between the courses of a *table d’hôte* dinner, and is oftentimes put warmly forward by the veteran, in the absence of the younger sisters, or in the neighborhood of curates, as a Home Treasure.

The second, Diana, is tall, acidulated, intellectual; a Diana with a greenish complexion, a tip-tilted nose, improvised eyebrows, and the least excellent voice that ever issued from a woman’s lips. She represents the genius of the group; is seldom without a Cambridge text-book in her hands, talks about Greek particles and the Differential Calculus, affects the First Republic as regards her flow of drapery, and in feature is said, by her relatives, to resemble Charlotte Corday.

Aurora, aged twenty-six, is peony-cheeked, laughing, indiscreet; the hoiden, the irrepressible, gushing, spoiled child of the family. On the present occasion Aurora wears a short white frock, a sash, and very brilliantly colored stockings. Her sleeves are tied, baby-fashion, on her shoulders with crimson knots, buttercups and daisies, in a wreath, are twined amidst her disheveled locks. “The cottage maid of Wordsworth, who had a rustic woodland air,” so Diana will whisper to you in sisterly confidence, “is thought by painters to be well embodied in our little wild Aurora.”

“Yes, if we were at our own place at home, the naughty child would be in the school-room still,” runs on Mrs. Skelton archly; “but we manage, Di and I between us, to coax her sometimes to her lessons. Aurora is sadly backward at her French verbs—you are not a mother, Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, you know nothing about these minor worries—and her arithmetic still falls short of the mark. On the other hand, her proficiency in music is beyond her years. Rora, my sweetest, don’t you see that Mr. Longmore is hoping for his after-dinner song?”

To other eyes than those of maternal affection it might look as though Mr. Longmore were hoping for nothing; with so unexpectant an air does the young Oxonian enjoy his after-dinner smoke.

“Not brought down your notes? Now, Rora, that is only shyness, and, indeed, after the sums your poor papa and I have spent on your music, you ought to be able to sing without a book at all. Don’t you remember the bishop’s daughters in our charming Auchester circle? No, it was before your introduction into society. Pansy and Dian will recollect them. How quite too delightfully they were able to give us song after song without notes! On one occasion, when we were dining at his lordship’s, I can recall Mr. Archdeacon Prettyman observing—”

“I know it would bore Mr. Longmore into fits to have to listen,” interrupted Aurora, rolling her black eyes deprecatingly in the young Oxonian’s direction. “Mr. Longmore knows my songs by heart from beginning to end. He has told me so, often. And then the men are such horrid inconstant creatures! ‘One foot on shore, and one—’ Don’t listen, Mr. Longmore, I won’t allow you to listen, of course we are not talking of you—they care for nothing but change and novelty. I declare I’ll never sing to please a man again while I live. I vowed so only last night, didn’t I, Di?”

Mr. Longmore, at this pathetic declaration, throws away the end of his cigarette, and crosses the terrace. He glances down, as admiringly as he may, at the peony cheeks and shoulder-knots, the brilliant stockings, the disheveled locks, the withered daisies and buttercups of poor Aurora.

“You don’t want me to repeat what I have so often said—that it gives me pleasure to hear you sing, Miss Skelton?”

A certain tenderness is in his voice, or his hearers think so. Aurora Skelton bridles, hangs down her head, then moves away toward the salon window. The girl is really prettyish, despite the exceeding vulgarity that comes to her by education and inheritance; has, at least, the negative charm of being fresher, fairer than her sisters. She has also fallen in love, of an easy kind, with the good-looking undergraduate, who, during the past fortnight, has been vainly endeavoring to "read" in the Grand Hotel Scherer!

And Hugh Longmore is weak enough to feel flattered.

The young fellow, in very truth, has overhigh ideals of womanly grace and refinement. Aurora Skelton, educated partly on the pavement of an English cathedral town and partly in the public rooms of foreign hotels, is a flirt, in the fullest acceptation of that most odious word. As well ask grapes from thistles as look for modest feminine charm in the daughter of such a mother! from her maiden bower on the second floor, Aurora casts down eye-shots at young Longmore, while her hair is still *en papillote* of a morning. She intercepts him on his way to breakfast, pursues him from terrace to terrace, breaks in upon his morning's reading in the remoter corners of the gardens, informs him, half a note flat, during the afternoon hours that she is "weary" "alone," "fading away," or "owre young to marry;" and she jars upon every finer sense the lad possesses, at all times.

But Aurora has bold black eyes, a pair of ruddy lips, white teeth, and a dimple in her left cheek. She has also a mother. And Longmore, unguarded by sister, cousin, or chum, is in greater peril than he suspects.

Refined, fastidious youths, fresh from the cloisters of taste the most conservative, have ere this been seen to form life-long alliance with coarseness, possibly through chivalrous inaptitude at repulsion, possibly through some mysterious physical affinity hard to understand.

The rosemary, we know, will not live with the laurel, nor the laurel with the vine, nor the cabbage with the olive. Yet does garlic planted in the neighborhood of the rose supply the flower with a richer fragrance.

"If Mr. Longmore wishes for his song, Aurora, run for your notes at once. That dear girl's diffidence must positively be got over," whispers Mrs. Skelton into Longmore's ear when Aurora has obediently tripped away. "You can

not think what it costs her, Mr. Longmore, even to sing before you. 'I know Mr. Longmore is a finished critic,' the child will often declare to her sisters. 'Such exquisite classic taste, such knowledge, such culture! If I could only feel sure of his approval!'"

"Of my approval—madame," stammers Longmore, looking wretched.

"In *my* singing days I was in the light and comic style," cries the veteran, skittishly tapping the young man's arm with her fan. "Indeed, there are some who still care to hear me in 'Misthress Malone.' But Aurora is all for the pathetic. You know, Mr. Longmore, I am quite a believer in community of soul, and I must say you seem to have the same tastes in everything. Ah, Rora, my dear," the young lady at this moment peeping forth from the salon window, a music-book under her arm, "be sure you give Mr. Longmore something good and serious—'The Lost Chord,' say, to lead off with."

And Aurora gives it him; out of time from first to last, and thumping a heated accompaniment, every third bar of which contains at least one wrong note. But Longmore, although a passionately keen lover of music, is not a stern judge to-night. The critical faculty, at two-and-twenty, is apt to be partial when a showy girl, more than half in love with one's self, heaves palpitating sighs and flings upward melting glances through her eyelashes as she sings.

"The Lost Chord" (how often do Aurora's hearers wish that chord had been lost indeed!) is ruthlessly murdered. Then follows a massacre of Schubert's "Ave Maria" and of the "Serenade" of Gounod. Happily, there are states of mind in which a man can be distinctly possessed by two sets of impressions at once. Leaning over Aurora's shoulder, patiently turning the pages of her book and enduring alike her wrong notes and her ogles, Hugh Longmore catches a reflected glance of Leman in an opposite mirror; can imagine himself on the lake's blue breast half a dozen miles away, the dip of the sculls, the light lap of the waves, the trickle of mountain rivulets for music; his pipe, his *Æschylus*, and the delicious sense of being alone and unbored by companionship.

By the time they return to the terrace, the sun has sunk over Jura's purple crest; Venus shines tremulously in his wake; the light-forsaken mountains have gone from amber

to crimson, from crimson to ashen gray. Already a few faint points of light stud the deep vault of heaven.

"The Ram, the Bull, the Heavenly Twins," quotes Mrs. Skelton, playfully. "I don't know how the young ones feel, Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, but to me the air strikes chilly. Pansy, Dian, my loves, why not take a last turn round the gardens while you still have light? Coax some flowers out of Monsieur Scherer, if you can find him, for to-night's ball."

Thus craftily does the veteran ever dispose of her contingent of forces. Pansy and Diana have had, or have not had, each her day, they must leave Aurora an open field when Aurora's star chances to be in the ascendant.

"As for you two delinquents," she cries, kissing the tips of her fingers with grewsome gayety to Longmore and his companion, "I do not doubt you have some mischief still to plot together. Aurora, sweetest child, be steady! Don't let your spirits run away with you. I am sure Mr. Longmore would like a description of that last Auchester Festival, and the delightful county people you and your sisters met at the palace."

Aurora replies by a burst of discordant Skelton laughter; and Longmore, with nerves absolutely set on edge by the sound, gives a moral shiver. Hopeful sensation for a man on the brink of folly; impossible sensation for a man on the brink of love!

"Ma does go on so about that dull old Auchester. As if I cared a fig for square-toed canons and musty bishops' palaces." Thus Aurora, dancing with infantine vivacity, shoulder-knots, buttercup wreath and all, along the terrace. "For my part, I never want to set foot in an English cathedral town again. Do I look suited for stiff parties, Mr. Longmore, for clerical society, in general, and bishops' breakfasts in particular?"

"You ask me, honestly. I am afraid I must answer: 'no!'"

"A place like Auchester did all very well for Dian. Di is so awfully clever. Not a book you mention but she is up in it, and as to the magazines, Di can read eleven serials at once, and keep the eleven different love affairs clear in her head. Pansy, of course, was in her element because of the curates. I am not clever, as you, Mr. Longmore, must have found out, and with regard to curates—"

“With regard to curates?” repeats Longmore, as Aurora Skelton pauses.

The young lady is taken afresh with a fit of laughter, somewhat more hysterically discordant than the last. Bad creature that he is! What does, what can, Mr. Longmore mean? Curates, indeed! He will be asking her opinion of barristers next. A shame, that it is, to chaff her like this, but she, Aurora, knows what he is hinting at. Mr. Longmore is to be a barrister himself before very long, is he not?

An alarming depth of meaning is in her voice. Young Longmore glances away toward the valley of the Rhone, away toward the mountains, upon whose topmost peaks the fairy-like pink after-glow has once more shone forth. Abruptly, the thought flashes on him that a train will leave Clarens Station for Aigle at seven thirty-five to-morrow morning. At Aigle a man has only to buckle his knapsack across his shoulder, start for the mountains, and—

“The one place on earth for me is London,” says Aurora, shrewdly translating for herself the expression of the lad’s face, and becoming cured of hysterics on the instant. “We have quite a legal connection in London. Aunt Julia, a sister of my papa’s, is married to Sir Joseph Sweeting’s cousin. The great Q. C., you know.”

Longmore knows. How often has that apocryphal legal connection been tantalizingly waved, like the matador’s red flag, before the embryo barrister’s sight?

“And next season I hope to pay Aunt Julia a visit. You will come and see me, won’t you, Mr. Longmore, if you are in town?”

“I should be delighted at all times, in all places, to do that, Miss Skelton.”

“And we can look back to these happy Clarens days,” says Aurora, speaking with the stereotyped little glow and little shiver, and punctuating the sentence with sighs. “We shall have grown wiser, both of us. We shall wonder, I dare say, how we could ever have been so foolish!”

“We—you—will have abundant opportunity for hearing good music in London,” answers Longmore, returning with laudable presence of mind to his muttons.

Miss Aurora Skelton glances at the young man sharply. He is still watching the distant valley of the Rhone, and his countenance does not play him traitor.

"When I stay with my aunt Julia I shall be in the very highest musical circles, and T. S. can always run up from Aldershot to take me about to concerts and operas."

T. S. is the fond abbreviation of "Thomas Skelton," the only male hope of the family, and a lieutenant in one of her majesty's marching regiments; of whom we shall be forced to see more hereafter.

"Hearing the best professionals," proceeds Aurora, "or, if Aunt Julia is generous, a dozen good finishing lessons would give my singing a little of the bravura style, would they not?"

"*Finishing* lessons!" repeats Longmore, his emphasis supplying unintentional irony.

"Yes. Just enough to learn a few show songs, you know. Of course I've done with solfeggios." Aurora Skelton manufactures her barbarous Italian plural unblushingly. "What I want is bravura. I had a course from one of the best masters last winter at Nice, and that is what he told me I wanted—bravura."

Longmore's eyes are still turned in the direction of the mountains, and he remains silent. The last changeful hues of the day that is dead have paled, reflushed, gone pale again. A greenish flame-like luster shows forth in inky relief, the angular peaks of Cubli and the Jaman.

"La, gracious, if there isn't the moon! I do so love to see the moon rise." Like Emerson's young lady, poor Aurora adores poetry, roses, the moon, the sky, and—cavalry officers. "If we turn sharp round the left corner of the terrace, we shall see her come up over the Dent du Midi to perfection."

And turning sharp round the corner of the terrace proves, as chance will have it, the immediate salvation of Hugh Longmore.

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNING OLD VIOLINS.

FOR he and his companion are brought within focus of a balcony on the first floor of the hotel.

And across the balcony railing leans a girl whose eyes, even in this half light, see further than most people's, whose brain is rapid at deduction as a child's, and whose

incisive promptness of action might quicken jealousy in the breast of an Alexander or a Bismarck.

Across the balcony railing, serenely contemplative of lake and mountains—yet in the very mood of restless idleness that renders the human heart promptest at meddling in the love affairs of others—leans Joyce Dormer, the younger of the ladies whose violin case and whose exclusiveness—it may be the attendance of whose Latest Victim—have fired so many feminine breasts in the Hotel Scherer with indignant curiosity.

A girl in a sad-colored gown, tall, graceful, fair, and twenty; a girl slender of throat and limb, with a face on whose sweet outlines the peachy bloom of childhood seems yet to linger, hands so charged with expression it sets you dreaming of fine harmony but to look at them, and a pair of large, admirably lucid blue eyes. Such, at a glance, is Joyce.

She catches sight of Longmore and his companion, hears a scream or two of Aurora's laughter, a burst of Aurora's mock enthusiasm, then draws hastily back behind a half-closed venetian shutter and watches them: watches them, not that she may gather facts whereupon to rest a theory, but contrariwise. It is Joyce Dormer's habit to feel ere she thinks, to judge of things, women and men by instinct, and at first sight. Facts have to fit themselves into her judgments, afterward, as best they may.

"Mr. Farintyre, come hither."

Low is her voice and tuneful, yet does a certain slowness of utterance, a suggestion rather than an actual tone of weariness, contrast pathetically with her airy girlish figure, with the blooming summer of her face.

A very fat, very blonde young man (of the order of men evidently whose fortune is in their pockets, not their brains) lies dozing on a sofa at some little distance. He rouses himself after one or two ineffectual efforts, rubs his eyes with both very fat, very blonde hands, then rises and, without much lover-like alacrity in his movements, crosses the room to Joyce's side.

Quite of the first water must be this young man's tailor, idem, his haberdasher and boot-maker. You think of them all, tailor, haberdasher and boot-maker, at the earliest moment of your introduction to him. You seem to hear the jingle of his money at every movement. Frankly vacuous

are his round, reddish-brown eyes, vacuous is the smile by which, no very perceptible jest to the fore, he shows the whiteness of his teeth. His expression is one of heavy good humor, of contentment with the world that affords daily physical enjoyment to Mr. John Farintyre. And he wears ostentatious jewelry. Miss Dormer's sway can, surely, not be so absolute over him as current gossip alleges. He wears ostentatious jewelry!

"Do you see those two people in the garden?" says the girl, beneath her breath. "Do not look at me, please—I must tell you, Mr. Farintyre that you have fallen into a terribly bad habit of doing so, lately. And do not look at the sky above or in the lake below. 'Try,' pronouncing each word, syllabically, like one who smoothes down a hard sentence for a child's comprehension, "to pull your scattered faculties together and to do simply and literally as you are bidden. You see that good-looking English boy, and the—the young person he is talking with on the terrace yonder?"

Joyce's lover, if lover he be, shakes his head and rubs some still lingering mists of sleepiness out of his eyes. Then, in the perfectly level, flat voice whereby fatigued young gentlemen of the present day give expression to their feelings, he ejaculates:

"Longmore of Corpus, by Jove! With a lady."

"Longmore of Corpus, *not* with a lady," repeats Joyce rather cruelly. "Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Farintyre, that young poor lad is a college friend of yours?"

"Friend," observes Mr. Farintyre, "is a strong word. Hugh Longmore and I were in different sets at Oxford—"

"Of that I am perfectly sure," interrupts Miss Dormer, with emphasis.

"Believe he may have got introduced to me at some of the college wines—quite a different set of fellows, you see. Lincolnshire rector's son—screwing along on a wretched three hundred a year, reading man, went in for professors' lectures and tea, æsthetic culture—tell me if I've got hold of the jargon right—and all that sort of thing."

"I understand. Never smuggled a fox-terrier into college in a brown paper parcel, never drove tandem through plate glass windows in the High Street, nailed up a proctor's door, or painted any of the public statues pea-green. In spite of these demerits," says Joyce Dormer coolly,

“he is an exceedingly nice, refined-looking boy, and, friend or no friend, he is a fellow-creature and shall be saved. Please do not look at me, Mr. Farintyre,” with a quick impatient movement, turning her head aside, “but listen attentively to what I am saying. Longmore of Corpus shall be saved.”

Mr. Farintyre, forbidden the first natural use of his eyes, does the next best thing—at how immeasurable a distance—open to him. He looks at Aurora Skelton.

“Handsomish gurl, that!” The remark is made in a tentative tone rather than one of certainty. “Not very unlike Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity, only worse form.”

“Has Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity a false ear? Has Rosie Lascelles the flattest, harshest voice that ever issued from a human throat?”

“Rosie pipes like a linnet. Ask any one who saw her in that burlesque on ‘Frou-frou’”—Mr. Farintyre looks almost interested—“if Rosie Lascelles sings in tune!”

“Then, what right have you to libel her by such a comparison. The young person with shoulder-knots has been singing false notes at Longmore of Corpus half the afternoon, and again since dinner. How can I tell it? At whom should the false notes have been sung, if not at him?”

“At—at some other fellow, perhaps.”

“Mr. Farintyre, I did not think you would have attempted to argue in such a cause. Neither should I have suspected you of ill-timed attempts at humor. Far from his natural protectors, poor little lad!” Longmore of Corpus stands just within six feet one in his slippers. “A stranger, in a foreign land—it is your duty, as an Englishman, to look after him.”

“Oh, Longmore will get along all right,” remarks John Farintyre lazily. “The gurl looks the sort to draw him out. Shy of ladies, generally, high ideals, you know—looks upon women as superior sorts of beings, and that. Not a man I ever had anything to say to.”

Forth darts a mischievous flash from Joyce Dormer’s blue eyes.

“You will have something to say to him now, yes, before another two minutes are over. ‘Will you come into my parlor,’ asks the spider of the fly? And the innocent

fly, through your moral support and agency, Mr. Farintyre, shall take courage and answer: 'No.' Go down to the man who is not your friend, and tell him that I, Joyce Dormer, desire to make his acquaintance. Does that not please you? Then exercise your fertile brain in hitting upon some better excuse. And quickly! The spider draws her webs closer—the lady's voice has sunk to a whisper. There is not a moment to lose."

A wooden staircase descends, chalet-fashion, from the long line of balconies on the first floor to the flower gardens of Hotel Scherer. Down this staircase, a heavy, not too willing figure makes its way ere another minute has passed; Miss Dormer, her fair head powdered with silver by the moon, keeping watch over the development of the plot from above. Mr. John Farintyre whistles, somewhat tunelessly: he gazes round at lake, sky and mountain, then, hands in pockets, lounges up to the pair of sentimentalists on the terrace and by a drawled: "How are you?" renews his college acquaintance with the man who is not his friend.

Will the spider, affrighted, run? Will Miss Aurora Skelton take refuge in the proprieties?

Miss Aurora Skelton does nothing of the kind. Too artless a child of nature to wait for an introduction, the young lady enters, at a moment's notice, into the freest, easiest conversation in the world with the new-comer. She seats herself on the ivy-grown parapet that at this point divides the terrace from a slope of purple vineyard; then, clasping her hands round her knee, in an attitude copied, doubtless, from some illustrated love scene in one of Diana's eleven serials, rolls up her black eyes ingenuously in the direction of Mr. Farintyre.

"How well she would suit him, in the absence of Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity!"

This, or some analagous thought, crosses Miss Dormer's mind as she looks down, unnoticed herself, upon the group.

"A moonlit trip to Chillon? Well, to be sure!" So ring the loud exaggerated accents of Aurora Skelton. "What an *awfully* jolly idea!"

"After an acquaintance of one minute and a half," interpolates Joyce mentally, "to credit poor John Farintyre with ideas!"

"I should like it *awfully*, any evening you choose, that is to say if ma would give me leave, and I know she would. Dian and I used often to row about with the gentlemen at home. I mean from the Pension Potpourri down at Nice. Besides T. S. is coming in a day or two, and he could chaperon us. What do you say, Mr. Longmore?"

"I say," repeats Joyce, half aloud, and with growing determination, "that Mr. Longmore shall be rescued. Yes, John Farintyre may conduct the awfully jolly expedition to Chillon, with or without T. S., if he likes. Longmore of Corpus shall be rescued. Now, for the means of his deliverance. Ah, I have it—Stradivarius!"

She flies across the room at the inspiration; three or four moments later, behold her gliding softly back, her violin between her hands, to the window! Standing within its embrasure, just where a slant of moonlight falls with ivory whiteness on her figure, Joyce Dormer begins to play.

The strain she chooses is admirably suited to the scene and moment; one of those Nativities in which the old composers loved to reproduce the tunes performed in early summer, by the Pifferari, before the street shrines of the Virgin; a strain pure, passionless, as her own girlish face.

Execution is not her strong point. While she lives, Miss Dormer will possibly never compass a grand bravura passage, a single striking or bizarre effect. In the true Italian quality of making her violin sing, in the broad, simple, vocal character of music like this, music in whose traditional triple tempo one "feels the starlight," Joyce is already, at twenty years old, an artist.

After the nativity, she begins a solo sonata, one of the famous Twelve of Corelli. Ere the first andante movement is half over a hasty step crosses the terrace, approaches stealthily up the wooden stairs, then stops. And a smile of victory steals round Joyce's lips. She throws herself with spirit into the quick tripping movement, the sparkling semiquavers and brilliant staccato runs of the second part. With mingled fire and delicacy her bow lingers over the third movement, a broadly majestic adagio. Few amateurs can play a fine adagio, for the reason that here the spontaneous gift of melody, Joyce's special endowment, is the only thing that avails. By the time she reaches the last bars of the final presto, a man's figure throws its shadow suddenly between herself and the moonlight.

Miss Dormer starts away with a little frightened gesture, that, to say the least of it, is *bon trovato*. At the same moment the big drawling voice of John Farintyre at once dispels every suspicion of romance, and explains the situation.

“Mr. Hugh Longmore, college acquaintance, fond of Mozart and Beethoven, up in classical music and that sort of thing. Mr. Hugh Longmore—Miss Dormer.”

Joyce bends her head, coldly. She stands motionless, her eyes downcast, her violin clasped between both white hands upon her breast.

And Longmore feels that he has committed an indiscretion.

Where is all the easy assurance, where the confidence in his own power and the weakness of woman engendered in him during his quasi love-affair with Aurora? What is there in that cold salutation, in that pair of slender folded arms, that they should paralyze him back to the worst shyness of his school-boy days?

“I am afraid you will call it a great intrusion, but I hoped—I mean, I feared—that is to say, Mr. Farintyre thought that you might be prevailed upon to play again.”

Fow a few moments Joyce refrains, obdurately, from helping him. She stands mute, frozen, while the poor fellow stammers and colors and repeats himself; enjoying his confusion, perhaps, as a cat enjoys the palpating misery of a mouse.

Then she lifts up her gaze of sweet, most steadfast blue, to the young man's face.

“Do you care for the violin *truly*?” she cries, moving a step toward him in the indistinct light. “Do you ask me to play, as people ask one to dance a quadrille, from a sense of duty, or because my playing would give yourself pleasure? Oh, if you are a real music-lover, you shall hear just as much of my Stradivarius as you choose—I will get my mother to accompany me. Mr. Farintyre, run up to the second floor, please. Mamma's number is fifty-five, the room exactly over this one, and say we should like some music. Come in, Mr. Longmore.”

And by a little wave of the hand, by a softening that just falls short of a smile around the lips, she promotes young Longmore, on the spot, to the rank of an acquaintance.

Mr. Farintyre obeys Joyce's commands with the promptness of one well broken to the duties of fetching and carrying, and Longmore, a man of conjectural habit of mind, finds himself speculating, with a sensation of absurdly keen jealousy, as to the probable relations that exist between the two.

Farintyre, though brainless, is rich, the only son of a long-established, well-accredited city stock-broker. Farintyre drove the best turnout of his time in Oxford; rode the best horses at the Heythorp meet; gave the most extravagant wines and dinners of any man at Merton.

The Dormers are poor, traveling around the Swiss lakes, according to Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, with a pair of portmanteaus, a shabby violin case, and—

“*Fa, fa, sol, fa,*” goes a rapid sweep of Joyce's bow across the strings.

Even in this moment's preliminary tuning, Longmore receives an impression, never to be effaced, of the girl's rare and finished excellence of posture; the quiet shoulder-joint, the firm and flexible wrist, the exact right-angle of bow; delightful graces all of them to one who appreciates with ear and eye alike.

“Flat, again! The air of Lake Geneva most certainly disagrees with violins. Stradivarius is as sensitive to every change of weather as a barometer. You care something for Cremona violins, I hope, Mr. Longmore?” still screwing up the strings as she speaks. “Then you will envy me mine. It belongs to the master's finest period and does not bear the name of Amati, like the earlier ones. If you like to look nearer, you will see the label, ‘Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis faciebat, 1720.’”

Young Longmore crosses to her side. “I don't know whether you can read the letters at that distance,” she remarks, warily holding out her Stradivarius for his inspection. “The second morning call Mr. Farintyre made on my mother and myself he adroitly managed to let my violin fall, and on that occasion I vowed never again to trust it into less sure hands than my own. Perhaps you would like to come just a fraction closer?”

This fraction brings Miss Dormer's silky hair somewhat dangerously near the young Oxonian's face. She continues her lecture on Cremona violins with undisturbed gravity.

“1720, yes, that was in the master's golden time.

Hear," tapping the sounding board lightly with her finger, "how the very pores are full of music! Look, when one holds it sideways, at the marvelous curve of the back, at the cutting of the F holes. One can believe that violin wood was taken only from the sunny side of trees. A kind of sunshine seems to linger here, still, under the mellow varnish, and as for the weight—feel it! I am not afraid, now that I know you two minutes better, of trusting Stradivarius into your hands."

Longmore looks over the violin, inch by inch; he detects beauties here, asks questions there; shows altogether so singularly keen an interest in the history, ancient and modern, of this instrument that the lecturer's blue eyes begin to glance gravely at him in the moonlight.

"It was through undeserved good fortune that my Stradivarius ever became mine." As she remarks this, Miss Dormer moves slightly away from the young man's side. "When I was quite a girl, more than two years ago, it was my whim to possess a genuine eighteenth century violin, and—a friend mamma and I had at that time promised me a Stradivarius, if love or money, chiefly money, could procure one."

"Not Mr. Farintyre?" interrupts Longmore, who is at an age still, when men's lips, wisely or unwisely, blurt out the uppermost thought.

For an appreciable instant Joyce hesitates, looking at him with direct, discerning glance.

"Mr. Farintyre! We made his acquaintance in the course of this last London season," she remarks quietly. "Mr. Farintyre must have been at Oxford in his mid-career of academical idleness at the time I talk. No, the friend who gave me my Cremona, my dear old Stradivarius—"

Taking back the violin abruptly from Longmore's hand, she clasps it with a gesture that in another woman one would be tempted to call affectation, to her heart. Precisely at the same moment the door opens, Mrs. Dormer and John Farintyre enter the room, and the history of Stradivarius—not without its importance as regards Hugh Longmore's life—remains a fragment.

"This is Mr. Longmore," says Joyce, in her subdued voice, with the total absence of that artificial compound

usually called manner. "Mr. Longmore wishes to hear my violin, mamma. Will you accompany me?"

During the past fortnight, Longmore has grown to associate the terrible word "Mamma" with rouge, wrinkles, warranted smiles, a scarlet shawl, pink cap-ribbons, and an ever-impending sense of his own capture. He finds himself in the presence of a girl, or so Mrs. Dormer looks, seen through the dusky gauze of moonlight; a girl with a sleek little uncovered head, with an infantine profile, and with a pair of big, blue-gray eyes, over-innocent in their expression.

Over-innocent! That, I believe, is Longmore's first, perhaps it may prove his final thought on the subject of Mrs. Dormer. The expression of those big, blue-gray eyes is over-innocent.

She advances, John Farintyre in the background (did ever woman tread so softly as do these two?) and offers the young Oxonian her hand with an amount of cordiality nicely proportioned to the lightness of his purse and the undoubted advantages of his person. For Mrs. Dormer conspicuously possesses the finer shades of manner her daughter lacks; makes up, indeed, by ultra-proficiency in the science, for whatever intentional disregard of the ritual of Mammon may be shown by Joyce.

"Very pleased, indeed, to make Mr. Longmore's acquaintance." This is said in a voice soft as an *Æolian* harp, yet with a certain frigidity of accent that young Longmore feels he is intended to feel. "A college friend, Mr. Farintyre has been telling me, so I think, Joyce dearest, we may already say, a friend of ours. And a lover of music? Ah, these are, truly, the charming accidents of travel. We are moving slowly south, Mr. Longmore, to join my husband. Mr. Dormer has, for years, been an impassioned *bric-à-brac* hunter, and at the present moment, is literally so laden with *cinq* cento carvings and old china as to be anchored at Naples. Darling Joyce, is it not true? Your poor papa's brackets and tea-pots have anchored him fast?"

Darling Joyce has crossed to the piano: with her *Stradivarius* tucked, in true virtuoso style, under her chin, she stoops, and after striking "Fa" sharply, for her pitch, goes on with the screwing up of her violin strings.

"The piano is neither Erard nor Pleyel," she observes, glancing across toward Longmore. "But poverty will

make the best musician accustomed to sorry companionship, will it not, Stradivarius?"

And lightly, with a quick change of position, she rests her cheek, or Longmore suspects her lips, upon the time-blackened sounding-board of her violin.

At the obnoxious word "poverty," John Farintyre, who has sunk resignedly down upon the sofa, reddens to the roots of his hair.

"Your beloved Stradivarius will have as good companionship as you choose before long," he observes, in a tone half gallantry, half growl.

"I am afraid not," cries Joyce. And for the first time Longmore sees her smile. Miss Dormer has the rare charm of laughing scarcely at all, and of smiling only when she is really amused. "As soon as we are settled in our Nice lodgings for the winter, mamma will hire a piano from Eberius. The good old Jew has the very worst instruments in the world, and I fancy gives us the worst of all he possesses, probably because our circumstances compel us to bargain about price."

"Price! As if the price of a thing could ever matter." John Farintyre remarks this with the air of a Sardanapalus.

"It matters a good deal when you are hiring a piano in a Riviera watering-place," is Miss Dormer's calm answer. "It matters infinitely when you have at once an ear for music and a limited purse. 'A soul by nature pitched too high'—is the quotation correct, Mr. Longmore?—'by fortune brought too low.'"

"I must accompany you so well as to make everybody forget the quality of our piano," cries Mrs. Dormer, in her conciliatory smooth voice. "My love"—in that short, sweet appellation there lurks a tone that Longmore, prone to judge by trifles, recognizes as a distant reprimand—"what kind of music, I wonder, would our audience like best?"

"We will play, Mr. Longmore, a selection of airs from 'Carmen' first," answers the girl briskly. "'Carmen,' I must tell you, Mr. Longmore, brings back my youth, my first season, more than any other opera. Oh, it is very easy for you to look disdainful, Mr. Farintyre. I hold that old things are best, and that it is wholesome to be reminded every now and then of dates."

When the mother and daughter have taken their places,

Longmore's glance wanders from the two fair heads to the accessories by which they are surrounded. The room is but the ordinary private salon of Swiss hotels: a room bare of furniture, destitute of adornment. But Mrs. and Miss Dormer, after inhabiting it a day, seem to have filled every nook and corner with the delicate charm of their own presence. Music lies on the piano, a bunch of wild-flowers and a little gray glove are beside the case of Joyce's violin on a side-table; two or three leather-bound books, within the embrasure of the window, a morsel of half-finished tapestry, a work-basket—and the picture is complete.

Mrs. Skelton and her daughters devastated Europe encumbered by no inconsiderable stock of stage properties. "Impossible to live," says the veteran, "without one's ongltourage! My girls, you see, have such delightful *recherché* tastes, Di in particular. Diana positively can not exist without elegance." And so, in each fresh room the Miss Skeltons inhabit, are scattered around carvings, statuettes, photographs, engravings; things of artistic value, it may be, in themselves, and yet that become simply so many unsuggestive details of vulgar upholstery when taken with their context—the Miss Skeltons.

Mrs. Scipio Leonidas travels around with luggage sufficient for a caravansary; with morning, afternoon, dinner, and ball-dresses; with diamonds; with a Russian Samovar, an English medicine-chest, a pug-dog, an abigail, and scrofulous French novels *ad libitum*. "My habits of life are *that* luxurious," the lady has been heard to confess, "that I can not stop a night on the road without opening at least three of my overland cases." And her drawing-room (she invariably takes the costliest one of every hotel at which she stays) is—the faithful reflex of Mrs. Colonel Scipio Leonidas P. Briggs.

The Dormers' dress is plain, almost to eccentricity. They have no lady's-maid; they have no statuettes; no ongltourage! Yet it comes to pass that the mere atmosphere they inhabit, the unadorned evidences of their every-day occupations affect Hugh Longmore like some flower's unexpected fragrance.

As he listens to their music, as he watches the two soft profiles in the moonlight, as he yields himself up, without a struggle, to the electric, perilous influences of the moment,

the young undergraduate is sensible of growing and distinctly inimical feelings toward Mr. John Farintyre.

That gentleman, in an attitude of more than ease on a sofa, contrives to keep his eyes open through the hammering rhythm of the opera's introductory theme; he nods vigorously through the bull-fighter Escamillo's song, and is comfortably asleep by the time Joyce's bow, with suave and sonorous power, is rendering the striking phrase in *D minor*, the pathetic leading motive of the work. When a final fortissimo at length betokens that Jose has plunged his dagger into Carmen's heart, Mr. Farintyre raises himself drowsily about a couple of inches, drawls "'Thanks, very pretty,'" between two yawns, and then remarks that it is about time to light up the gas.

"Light up the gas, keep out the moonlight," cries Joyce, "close the piano and the windows, and let us settle down to a game of Napoleon or *écarté*. Do not defend yourself, Mr. Farintyre, I know that is what you mean. Poor Mr. Farintyre detests music," she adds, turning with an explanatory air to Longmore, "and an evil fate seems to have decreed that he shall, for awhile, be our traveling companion. The usual story of the square peg in the round hole. Instead of lighting the gas we will decide on our next piece. Shall we play a duet of old Viotti's, for a contrast?"

"We ought to consult the opinion of our hearers," says Mrs. Dormer, turning her head and giving Longmore the full benefit of her large eyes. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would call them handsomer eyes than her daughter's; they are, indeed, Joyce's, but thawed; to the hundredth man, the charm might be in the ice. "Our taste, Mr. Longmore, is, I am afraid, severely old-fashioned. With the exception of this somewhat tinsel piece of work, 'Carmen,' there is scarcely one piece of popular music that Joyce can be prevailed upon to play."

"Carmen, mia Carmen, adorata," sings Miss Dormer, in a low voice. "Don't say anything against poor Bizet or his opera to-night, mother."

"I repeat only what the best critics have written, my love. The Wagnerish notion of introducing the *Leitmotiv*—those two singular bars, with their superfluous second, at every critical moment, is striking, but scarcely more than a trick. Most certainly it is not original. Is not the entire

opera of 'Lohengrin' based upon the change of the A major chord to that of F sharp minor?"

"I shall love Carmen for ever and ever," says Joyce Dormer with decision. "So I suppose it is certain that my taste inclines toward tinsel. Mr. Longmore, what shall be our next performance? We look to you for a decision."

"I should like whatever you are kind enough to play for me," says Longmore, crossing to the instrument. "A duet of Viotti's," he adds, making a bold, but hazard shot, "most of all."

"Ah, you know him, you care for Viotti's simple, grand old music," cries Joyce, raising her bow, eagerly.

"I know that you mentioned his name, Miss Dormer. Nothing more."

"Viotti should feel flattered! Under circumstances like these, mamma, you are the best judge of what is suited to us all—Mr. Longmore, ourselves, and—and Mr. Farintyre. You have an instinct for majorities, you know—which flatterer of our acquaintance told us that? and I have not."

"If I am to decide," says the elder lady, "and as it is too dark for us to see a note, I propose that we keep to something unambitious: 'From North to South,' say; the piece Mr. Farintyre likes."

And Mrs. Dormer chooses well. The piece "Mr. Farintyre likes" is a popular, simply set collection of the world's national anthems. The crustiest tune-hater could scarcely demur at patriot hymns, rendered with spirit, in an exquisite hour of mingled dusk and moonlight, by dilettante fingers fair as these!

John Farintyre, waking up, applauds appreciatively. Is not "God save the Queen" one of the two melodies he can distinguish negatively from all others, brought into the performance?

"Brava, brava!" he cries, with a resounding clap of his big hands. "I call that good music. None of your blessed sonata and cantatas, your Corelly's and Viotty's, but something a man can understand. Music with a jingle in it!"

Joyce turns quickly round—a little pivot-like courtesy enabling Longmore to see that her foot is as slender as her hand. She gives Farintyre a mocking glance of her blue eyes.

"After such a graceful compliment, Mr. Farintyre, you shall be rewarded by our shutting up our instruments. Not

another note of Corelly's or Viotty's shall you hear to-night. Would it be too great an exertion, do you think, for you to look about for my violin-case?"

Is her manner one of entreaty, command, indifference? Longmore, fond of puzzling over rigidly unanswerable questions, puts this one to himself. The lad comes fresh from the schools and all that the schools can teach; has Grote and Mommsen at his fingers' ends; brims over with Plato, "sawn up into quantities by Aristotle," and is not unversed in the latest German philosophies. He is also, by temperament, an analyst, given to geometrical subtleties, forever asking the wherefore of abstract passion and of possible motive.

In common every-day human concerns, especially such concerns as happen to be complicated by the working of a girl's heart, Hugh Longmore, at two-and-twenty, is ignorant as a child.

"The night is a great deal too fine to be wasted within doors," observes Joyce, when she has carefully locked up the case of her Stradivarius. "What do you say to a moonlit stroll, mother? Do you remember the little plateau high among the hills to which you and I scrambled our way two autumns ago? Why not all adjourn there now?"

"The plateau above the chestnut woods—with the wonderful panorama of Chillon and the upper lake. Charming—"

But here an ominous sound causes Mrs. Dormer to stop short. She glances, interrogatively, at the face of Joyce's suitor.

He is yawning, without even the decent shame that prompts us to suppress our yawns. Lakes and mountains of a morning, Corellys and Viottys of an evening, are, by no means, poor Mr. Farintyre's ideal of enjoyment; no, not with the added delight of a moonlit stroll, the intellectual treat of hearing Joyce discuss books and music with the man who is not his friend.

And, reading aright the expression of her intended son-in-law, Mrs. Dormer's own taste for chestnut woods and wonderful panoramas cools on the instant.

"I think I shall let you young people find your way to the plateau without me," she remarks, sinking into an arm-chair, and passing her white fingers over a brow fair and unfurrowed as a child's. "I have just a suspicion of head-

ache, and am more in a humor for quiet and rest than for scaling romantic hill-sides."

"Not in a humor for *écarté*, of course?" suggests Farintyre, getting up with an effort from the sofa, then crossing over toward the bell.

"The very thing to do me good, Mr. Farintyre. It is only fair you should wipe off that heavy score of gloves you lost to me at Grindelwald. Ring, *please!*" Mrs. Dormer is a little woman made up of pleading emphasis, of soft cooing italics, of the constant indirect flattery that makes itself felt through tones, rather than words. "We will begin our fight at once. Gas, we will have none of—only a couple of wax-candles to enable us to see the moonlight the better. Joyce, my dear, be advised. We have had enough fatigue for to-day."

Miss Dormer moves to the window; she looks out with longing eyes across the lake, clearly purple as the sky above, the fairy-like lights from half a score of boats dotting its surface, and with a glorious silver path shining straight away toward the mist-girt valley of the Rhone.

"Star-gazing versus *écarté*," she remarks, as a wave of cool and delicate night air flows in across her face. "If it were not for braving the dragons—I mean for running the gantlet of the salon windows—I should be tempted to make my way through the chestnut avenue toward Glion. I want to see how the first snows look by moonlight on the Col de Jaman."

"The dragons will muster in greater force than usual," says Longmore, who has followed her. "Monsieur Scherer has promised us a ball to-night, and an extra row of dowagers will be sure to line the salon windows. If you will accept my escort, Miss Dormer, I think you might perhaps get past them alive."

"But is your time at your own disposal?" asks Joyce, rather maliciously. "Are you not wanted for the ball? Are you positive your friends will not get up some moonlit expedition later on in the evening, to the castle of Chillon?"

"Oh, Chillon is for another occasion," cries out John Farintyre. "I got let in for Chillon by moonlight before I knew what I was about. Decidedly approachable, that friend of yours, Longmore, and not half bad-looking for the sort of style. By the way, what is her name? The young

woman with ribbons, you know, that you were spooning on, down by the wall, there?"

"*Spooning!*" repeats Hugh Longmore, his bronzed face reddening like a girl's.

"Or she on you; much the same thing, isn't it? Afraid I came up at a critical moment, from the embarrassed look of both parties."

"The young lady was Miss Aurora Skelton, a recent acquaintance, a—a daughter of Prebendary Skelton," says Longmore, a certain look in Joyce's blue eyes provoking him to stand on his dignity. "Mrs. Skelton is obliged to live most of the year out of England, for climate's sake. I believe they generally spend their winters in the south!"

"Skelton, surely that name ought to be familiar to me," Mrs. Dormer remarks, placidly. "Skelton. Yes, I am convinced we must have met Mr. Longmore's friends often—on the Promenade des Anglais, at Nice (if you insist on going out, child, you must really wrap up). There was a mother." Singular what keen-edged meaning a flute-like voice can throw into so simple a statement of facts. "And there were daughters."

"Daughters, very decidedly," says Mr. Farintyre growing jocular. "The moment I saw your friend, Longmore, she reminded me of Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity—Rosie Lascelles, minus the form, and minus the talent. If an actress does go in for attitude," here Mr. Farintyre's tone becomes one of conviction, "she does it well."

At this second mention of Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity, Joyce Dormer steps out on the balcony. She says something in a low tone to Longmore who is at her side, then makes the usual feminine pretense at "wrapping up" by knotting a small cambric handkerchief about her throat.

"Joyce, my love, why should you not play us a solo," cries Mrs. Dormer, glancing round from the table where John Farintyre is organizing candles and cards. "One of your own compositions, darling, or, better still, an improvisation. Depend upon it, Mr. Longmore would like to hear you improvise."

"Mr. Longmore shall be gratified on some future day, mother. We are going out now to have a look at the first snows on the Jaman. Perhaps I may prevail on Mr. Longmore to give me a lesson in astronomy."

"Delightful night for a stroll," observes John Farintyre, with a tolerable show of magnanimity.

"In the gardens of the hotel, yes." And Mrs. Dormer takes one of her quick looks at the young man's face. "But not beyond. Crime is positively becoming of every-day occurrence in Switzerland. I see in the 'Lausanne Courier' that the diligence was stopped last Thursday, near Chambery. A Sister of Mercy was robbed of her purse and an elderly Swiss banker—"

"Mother," interrupted Joyce, a well-defined shade of impatience in her tone, "is this Chambery? Am I a Sister of Mercy, or a diligence? Is Mr. Longmore an elderly Swiss banker? Play out your match at *écarté*—amuse yourselves well—and if I am not back by midnight, let the lights be extinguished and the hotel shut up. All that remains of me will be found somewhere between this and the summit of the Col de Jaman to-morrow."

CHAPTER III.

A MOONLIT SONATA.

THE salon windows are innocent of dragon or dowager; the salon, itself, newly beeswaxed and garnished for dancing is, as yet, empty.

Joyce Dormer and Longmore pass out through the silent dew-freshened gardens to the high-road, white, as though paved with marble, in the moonlight; they turn away by a narrow footpath in the direction of Glion, and after a quarter of an hour's steep ascent find themselves on the open mountain's side. Straight before their sight stands black, pine-covered Cubli. To the extreme right are the seven peaks of the Dent du Midi; a world of purple vineyard lies at their feet. Crystal clear has grown the atmosphere. The big, near stars flash and palpitate in many-colored fires of emerald and ruby. The sharp, needle-like Jaman, the lofty Nez, are printed in dense relief against a background of luminous sky.

It seems to Longmore in this ampler ether, in this pale Elysium light, as though he and Miss Dormer had been acquainted for years.

"Star-gazing on the whole is better than *écarté*," the girl remarks, seating herself with the *bon-garçon* air of

brusqueness that she carries off with such grace, upon a projecting point of bowlder among the heath. "And star-gazing might be improved by one's understanding a little about the stars. Years ago I recollect gaining an astronomy prize in some class mamma made me attend in Paris, and at the present hour I do not know a planet from a star of the first magnitude when I see them together. Of course you have the heavens at your finger-ends. What boys learn is so ground into them at school that, in spite of their best endeavors, they can not lose it all again as girls do."

"The Girton girls, for instance," suggests Longmore. "No Winchester school-boy in my day knew more about stars than that they existed."

"But you could tell their places? You must have learned something in that grand observatory at Oxford. You know, at least, where *that* came from?"

As she speaks the great vault has suddenly whitened with the hundred thousand miles glissade of some shooting meteor.

"I have a notion that I could find the Great Bear and Cassiopea," says Hugh Longmore. "I might even discover Arcturus, perhaps, on a pinch."

"Point them out to me. If you will kneel down on the heather, here, our eyes will be on the same level. It would never do to tell my mother and Mr. Farintyre that, although they may have enjoyed their écarté, our astronomy lesson came to nothing. We will begin with Arcturus."

"Arcturus," says the young Oxonian, taking his place somewhat shyly at Miss Dormer's side, "is the large very yellow star just in front of us."

"You must be more explicit, Mr. Longmore. I see a dozen large very yellow stars just in front of us."

"Arcturus is immediately above the tallest of those three large trees. You are looking quite in a wrong direction, Miss Dormer—follow the direction of my finger."

Joyce inclines her head, in grave obedience, until it is within a few inches of Longmore's. Her eyes follow the direction toward which he points.

"And has Arcturus a proper motion?" she asks, much as though she were questioning a professor of sixty with a watchful mamma and governess in chaperonage. "You

see how thoroughly I have forgotten everything. Can Arcturus be the old Bootis, going fifty-four miles a second, that we used to learn about in Paris?"

The lesson on astronomy is a long and a serious one. Seriousness characterizes Joyce Dormer's smallest movements, heightens what I should call the moral picturesqueness of her character. Sweet though her face be, it is unsmiling; her voice is below the concert pitch of artificial society-talk. Bright, sympathetic, full of unaffected interest in life, it requires an effort to imagine this girl of twenty getting out of breath about anything. Pre-eminently does she inspire you with a sense of rest, subtlest of charms, at all times, trebly subtle to a man who for a fortnight has suffered under the galvanic gushes, the overstrained noisy enthusiasm, equally false and equally little, of an Aurora Skelton!

When young Longmore's last word on the subject of stars is spoken, Miss Dormer consults her watch.

"What! must you return?" he asks. "Are you afraid that Mrs. Dormer is nervous still over her recollections of elderly Swiss bankers and the Chambery diligence?"

"Not the very least in the world. My mother and I flatter ourselves we do not possess a nerve between us. As long as mamma can make another person happy she is contented. Of course she makes Mr. Farintyre supremely happy by playing *écarté*."

"Oh, of course," assents Longmore.

And a sudden uncertainty comes over him as to whether John Farintyre be most in love with the mother or with the daughter.

"He is not, as a rule, amusable, I should say," observes Miss Dormer casually.

"Who—Farintyre? Well, really I knew little of his tastes at Oxford. My father is the rector of a poor Lincolnshire parish, Miss Dormer, and the keeping of college terms, for me, meant money. Farintyre's father is a millionaire. You can imagine that our paths lay wide of each other. A man reading eight hours a day, and finding all the pleasure he can afford in a walk along the high-road or a quiet pull on the river, is not likely to come across—"

"The undergraduate who is an adept at Loo, Van and Nap (these are Mr. Farintyre's own recollections of the Alma Mater), and whose only reading is of 'Bell's Life'

and the 'Sporting Times.' Precisely. It is because Mr. Farintyre is fond of cards and not fond of books that I should call him unamusable."

After this, there is a moment's silence, then: "You, of course, should know best?" suggests Longmore, a note of interrogation in his voice.

"I have had fair opportunities for judging during the last three weeks. Out of the twenty-one days we have spent in Switzerland, we have had eleven of rain—Mr. Farintyre is to a certain extent traveling with us; I mean, he stops when we stop, he sees what we see—and these eleven days have enlightened us all as to our several resources. I, personally, am never dull; I have Stradivarius. My mother is the most occupied little creature living, a great reader, a good worker, an indefatigable correspondent. But Mr. Farintyre!—If mamma were not so clever and so patient at card-playing, I think the poor fellow would have been bored into committing suicide."

"Bored when he was—I mean," says Longmore, happily stopping short on the brink of a compliment, "when he could have as much good music as he liked."

"*De gustibus non est disputandum*," says Miss Dormer, pronouncing her Latin very prettily. "You, perhaps, Mr. Longmore, might not be bored if you were to travel with mamma and me."

The point-blank coolness with which she advances the surmise renders a flattering answer impossible.

"But Mr. Farintyre does not know one note from another; boasts, indeed, that he can not distinguish between Mozart and 'Madame Angot.' Sometimes I think Mr. Farintyre is to be envied. When one remembers all the bad music there is in the world, the possession of an over-fine ear, or even of a cultivated taste would seem a doubtful benefit."

The subject of bad music brings them down with inductive celerity, with few fine intermediate shades, to the recollection of Aurora Skelton.

"That young lady deliberately slaughtered the 'Ave Maria' of Schubert in your presence this evening, and you abetted her. She sung three modern English songs, each more out of tune than the last. You listened. You applauded. Why?"

“Because—because I had no choice of doing otherwise,” is Longmore’s answer.

“Mr. Longmore, that defense is too lame. Do you not know, as a physical fact, the highly destructive effect false notes have on the nerve-centers?”

“I am afraid I know only too well, experimentally.”

“But have you mastered the theory? ‘Whenever two series of aerial undulations interfere with one another’—my first German music teacher made me learn this by heart—‘the effect upon the auditory nerves is that special form of discomfort cognized as a dissonance.’ Your friend’s singing throughout is ‘that special form of discomfort cognized as a dissonance.’ Yet you not only listen; you encourage her. Will you tell me why?”

If Longmore were discussing the question with a man, discussing it, say, in the truthful atmosphere engendered by midnight tobacco smoke and a bachelor fireside, he would possibly make mention of poor Aurora’s personal charms, of the dimple in the cheek, of the bold black eyes that consciously flatter every person of the opposite sex who looks into them.

On this lonely mountain-side, with Joyce Dormer’s quiet gaze encountering his own, he replies, stammering, that he supposes bad music, if one has a musical taste, is better than none, in out-of-the-way places. That is to say, it is an atrocious thing to hurt people’s feelings, and Miss Aurora Skelton was so good-natured as to offer to sing for him to-day, and—

“And Mr. Longmore was content to play the part of Tartuffe,” cries Joyce, rising to her feet. “Don’t attempt to vindicate yourself, sir. Bad music is infinitely worse than none, and you or I, knowing it to be bad, ought to stamp it out whenever we have a chance. Do you hear the cry of that far-off grasshopper?” she goes on. “Those two cracked monotonous thirds seem to me more pathetic, fuller of a real impassioned song than half the ‘Remembrances’ and ‘Alones,’ with their pretentious far-fetched accompaniments, that fill the Regent Street shop-windows.”

“But if ‘Remembrances’ and ‘Alones’ give pleasure to the majority,” says Longmore, “to the millions of men and women, mostly what Mr. Carlyle calls them, for whom such things are written?”

“The poorest song may at least be sung in tune. Mr.

Longmore, if you are so warm in your defense of false notes I shall begin to think bad things of you. It may be wise to change the subject. Would yonder goat-track lead us down to Clarens, do you suppose, or over the brow of the cliff? Then, by all means, let us take it. You may be pioneer." As she speaks, Miss Dormer surrenders her hand to the lad's keeping. "But we will meet our fate in company. If we could get just sufficiently far into danger to make one's heart beat quicker!"

But no danger of a physical kind awaits them. The goat-track leads, not across the brow of the cliff, but to a tiny knoll of greenest velvet, hemmed in by mountain larches, carpeted with upland flowers, a spot where it would scarce surprise you to come upon Caliban and Ariel, discoursing in the moonlight, or to see Cobweb and Moth and Peas-Blossom playing hide-and-seek among the grass.

A look of genuine, childish pleasure brightens over Joyce Dormer's expressive face.

"This is worth eleven days of rain! Worth all the dismal evenings we have spent since we came to Switzerland. '*Au clair de la lune.*'" Under her breath she runs through a bar or two of Luli's delicious melody. "I have to thank you, Mr. Longmore, for lighting on anything so charming. We must bring my mother here the first fine afternoon, and Mr. Farintyre, and a kettle, and drink our five-o'clock-tea *al fresco.*"

"Five o'clock tea, with music," suggests Longmore. "It is a promise that I shall hear you play something of your own composition, and the violin, like the voice, needs no accompaniment out-of-doors. Would you trust me, for once, Miss Dormer, to be the bearer of Stradivarius?"

"Not on the occasion of the tea-party," answers the girl. Hugh Longmore, reading between the lines, interprets her tone to mean not in the society of Mr. Farintyre! "If time were at my own disposal—or rather, if I had genius, not facility, it would be good, indeed, to bring Stradivarius to a wild place like this—to seek one's ideas, not from the printed score of others, but from Nature direct. Unfortunately, we amateurs are echoes of echoes. I can embroider a little with my bow, as you shall hear, any day you choose; but it must be on some real musician's motive. My improvisations, as mamma good-naturedly calls them, are pale copies of the Italian pastorals. I just

approach the threshold of originality, and yet stand outside in the cold forever."

Speaking thus, Miss Dormer moves a few yards onward, and then stops short. Around, behind her, is the never-to-be-forgotten little glade—the glade with its quiet larches, its fresh, wet grass, with Arcturus shining overhead. Immediately in front, a footpath leads down to the prosaic region of white-walled vineyards and gardens, to the Hotel Scherer, to a pair of prosaic card-players losing gloves to each other at *écarté*.

Joyce pauses for a second or two, her gaze turned skyward, her bare head surrounded by an aureole like a saint's. The wind, keen off the mountains, blows back the soft hair from her forehead.

"Did you ever remark, Mr. Longmore, that flowers have their moonlight smell? It surrounds us at this moment. Well, in the hottest London concert-room that peculiar cold sweetness comes back to me always when I hear Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata.'"

"The sonata dedicated to the Countess Guicciardi," says Longmore, looking hard at his companion's clear face, her buoyant airy figure. "The coquette who, after being loved by Beethoven, married a composer of ballet music. No, Miss Dormer, I know nothing about the effects of moonlight on vegetation. Flowers, with one or two exceptions, give out their strongest scent in the caloric rays of the sun. As facts prove, however, that the electric light is equally efficacious in producing chlorophyll in leaves, it may be assured—"

"Please don't be scientific!" breaks in Joyce, imploringly. "One may like a little exact science as regards the stars, but about flowers—No. Facts. Oh, if you are so skeptical as to require them, I will convince you instantly."

She hesitates, looking around her; then stoops above a mound overgrowing with wild thyme. She bruises a mass of the dewy odorous blossoms between her fingers.

"Flowers must have the caloric rays of the sun upon them, you tell me, in order to smell sweet. Then what, pray, do you say to this?"

And, abruptly, two little perfumed hands, white, cold as the moon's light itself, are held up across the young Oxonian's face.

Will the scent of wild thyme ever fail to recall this mo-

ment's intoxication to Hugh Longmore? Would the cynicism of every man of the world living convince him that Joyce Dormer was not acting from a pure and girlish impulse?

CHAPTER IV.

ASKING FOR TRUMPS.

GASLIGHT streams forth, murdering the moonbeams, through every open window of M. Scherer's state salon. Mrs. Skelton, in plumes and paint, thumps a waltz tune upon a piano, tinkling, worn-out, sharp of tongue as herself. The three Miss Skeltons fly around in the arms of three thick-booted, tweed-jacketed tourists, newly kidnapped, poor fellows, on their descent, foot-sore and blistered, from the mountains, and who will depart, affrighted, by the earliest train for Lausanne to-morrow! Twice, regularly, each week is a like batch of "Innocents Abroad" mercilessly executed, to pianoforte accompaniment by Miss Aurora Skelton and her elder sisters.

Mrs. Dormer and John Farintyre, their match at *écarté* ended, watch the ball-room from the grass terrace outside; Mrs. Dormer's neutral-tinted dress, her soft, fair face, her composed step, affording a grateful contrast to the be-ribboned, overheated votaries of noise and glare and rapid movement within.

"We say, every day, that the world is a small place, Mr. Farintyre. It seems to me that the world affords human beings a pretty wide scope for the exercise of their bad taste. These dear creatures, with their piano, and their smartness, and their gas, think they are enjoying the mountains, *are* enjoying them, doubtless," adds Mrs. Dormer liberally, "after a fashion."

"Well, yes, there is no accounting for taste," John Farintyre assents, with a somewhat surly glance in the direction of Glion. "Some old-fashioned people, you see, might call this a fitter hour of the night for dancing than for making mountain excursions."

"Are you thinking of Joyce? Oh, there is not the smallest occasion for fear," returns Mrs. Dormer, with admirable maternal philosophy. "Some weak-nerved mothers are in a constant fever about their children. I have never been

in a fever about Joyce. It was not my system. From the time Joyce was in short coats I have trained her to take care of herself. And she has done so. I positively do not remember her meeting with a bruise or a scratch like other children."

Mr. Farintyre's wits do not seem to furnish him with an adequate rejoinder. He glances still, and with undiminished surliness, in the direction of Glion.

"I must confess it would be as wise to start on these little expeditions by daylight. But in Joyce's case one must always make allowance, must one not, for artistic proclivities?"

"Artistic proclivities! A very convenient phrase!" says Mr. John Farintyre.

No change of feature or of voice betrays that the ill-humor of this speech strikes home to Mrs. Dormer.

"Joyce is an artist to her heart's core, although, happily for herself, dear child, she is destined to lead the life of an ordinary woman. Joyce seeks inspiration for her music in situations where other girls of her age—"

"Would be content, no doubt, to seek a flirtation," interrupts Farintyre. It will be seen that this young gentleman's manners have been formed among such disciples of progress as hold Lord Chesterfield obsolete. "Men, unfortunately, do not draw these fine distinctions. Miss Dormer's numerous admirers judge of her when she is in the inspiration-seeking mood, as they would judge of girls who are not geniuses, and get their vanity flattered accordingly! Now this young prig, Longmore—"

"Longmore?" exclaims Mrs. Dormer, resting her taper fingers upon the arm of her son-in-law presumptive. "And who is Longmore?—Ah, of course," after a moment's pretty hesitation, "the young Oxonian you introduced to us this evening—Longmore of Longford, did you say? A nice, refined fellow he seems—like all prigs." In her inmost soul is Mrs. Dormer guilty of a sarcasm? "Mr. Longford, one may feel sure, knows the district well. This makes Joyce's safety doubly certain."

"Her safety?" repeats John Farintyre between his teeth.

But Mrs. Dormer does not, or will not, detect the ill-humor of the ejaculation.

"If your friend plays whist we might organize a rubber

occasionally. It is time Joyce stored up provision for her old age by learning to like the game. And talking of whist reminds me, Mr. Farintyre, you said something to-day at lunch that I did not clearly follow." Mrs. Dormer unable to follow a remark of Farintyre's! "Some story, was it, showing that you may not ask for trumps after you have already had the lead and refrained from playing one?"

She draws him away, bearing her weight on his solid arm, looking up, her fine eyes full of interest to his face. When the whist-table story has been set forth with such dramatic liveliness as poor John Farintyre possesses: "I held knave of clubs, you understand, fourth round. Queen put on second hand; diamonds led through me, and then I called for trumps, and—and, begad, my partner returned the diamond and lost the trick!"—when that incomprehensible story, I say, has been stumbled through, criticised, retold, she glides cautiously on to matters connected with the hunting-field—matters about which Mr. Farintyre, like many another young city Cræsus, knows little, and loves to talk much.

"We women are so engrossed with small aims—our charities, calling-cards, art, music, and the last shape of bonnet with which we are threatened for the winter—that we scarcely know more than the outside names of men's pursuits. You were giving us an absurd account the other day of how some Frenchman headed the fox in the Pytchley hunt, and I believe Joyce and I both laughed without knowing why. Now tell me, exactly and truly, what 'heading the fox' means."

The explanation takes time. John Farintyre does not readily warm to the expressing of ideas, even his own, even when the ideas relate to the three or four subjects which awaken in him genuine interest. But Mrs. Dormer, with the acuteness of a Q. C., cross questions here, throws out a note of admiration there, from the hunting-field gets him to Ascot, from Ascot to Norfolk, from Norfolk to Hurlingham.

When the ingenuous youth is once brought to Hurlingham he becomes loquacious. In recollections of handicap sweepstakes, exciting ties, birds "grassed at thirty yards," and all the other details of pigeon-slaughter, one may surely hope that the lover has merged in the sportsman,

that the unhappy subject of moonlight walks and artistic proclivities will be forgotten! John Farintyre becomes loquacious, and Mrs. Dormer, set free from that heaviest of social labors, conversation-making, lapses gratefully into silence.

CHAPTER V.

THOSE OYSTERS.

AT this very time Joyce and Hugh Longmore are slowly re-entering the Hotel Scherer gardens. Afar off, Joyce recognizes the figures of Farintyre and of her mother, and stops short.

"I can see," she cries, "by the bend of Mr. Farintyre's head that he is amused—for the first time, I really believe, poor fellow, since we came to Switzerland. What happy inspiration can mamma have lighted upon? In any case, you and I are not wanted, Mr. Longmore. It would be cruel to interrupt them."

"The night is young. We have not seen the early snows upon the Jaman," suggests young Hugh Longmore.

Incipient sentiment is in his tone, and Miss Dormer crushes him promptly.

"We have not seen the snows, but we have had quite as much star-gazing as is good for us," she remarks. "We have sung our romantic moonlit duo at the back of the stage. Now for a comic scene or two before the foot-lights. What is life but a mixed opera?—an opera, in this case, it seems, with a ballet!"

As she speaks Joyce turns down a dark, trellised path which, at the end of twenty or thirty paces, brings them directly in view of the ball-room windows. The dancers still dance; the veteran, with unflagging fingers, still thrums antiquated waltz tunes upon the battered piano.

In a low and somewhat mischievous tone, Joyce Dormer requests Longmore to point out "his friends" to her.

"Miss Aurora Skelton I recognize. Her relatives I can guess at. Who is the thin little lady waltzing backward?—the lady with a profile, a Spanish mantilla, diamonds, and eyes?"

"That," answers Longmore, "is Mrs. Colonel Scipio Leonidas P. Briggs, of New Orleans. Her partner is an

Anglo-Saxon-speaking Parisian, freshly arrived in Clarens, and between them they are executing the only civilized dance to which the world has yet attained, the Boston. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs would herself call it the 'Bors'on.' "

"Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs is that marvelously rare being—a graceful woman." For Joyce has all an artist's generous appreciation of the good points of others. "Yes, Mr. Longmore, and she is so in spite of the 'Bors'on,' in spite of her exaggerated partner. We Nineteenth Century Englishwomen attitudinize and mimic," adds Miss Dormer. "We get painters to design our dresses, we take the celebrities of all the ages for our models, and succeed—to the point of becoming articulated lay-figures! The first little American girl one meets, overloaded though she may be with French finery, as much surpasses us in her grace of movement as the Roman women surpass us in their walk and carriage. Perhaps the sun is wanted for the ripening of this kind of beauty, as it is for grapes and olives."

"Have you lived all your life in sunshine?" asks Hugh Longmore quickly.

Ere he has had time to repent, as Joyce would certainly give him occasion to do, of the compliment, the piano ceases. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs and her partner come forth into the night.

The invalid wears a dress of amber satin, a color that well suits her pallid alabaster skin. A Spanish lace mantilla is thrown over Mrs. Scipio's head. Among the carelessly arranged waves of her black hair rests a solitary purple-damask rose.

Her partner is a young gentleman with nervous eyes, a waxen complexion, and a head of the type that school-girl novelists describe as Shelley-like—plenty of intellectual brow, plenty of fair curls, plenty of nose: mouth and chin wanting. This young gentleman's accent is nasal, his manner Frenchified; his clothes are made by a Parisian tailor; a gardenia is in his button-hole.

"Passable outline," he remarks, indicating the finest sweep of mountain in Europe, with a couple of languid, primrose fingers, and the air of a man who has heroically resolved to endure Nature—for a fortnight.

"Well, the Alps *are* handsome," Mrs. Scipio Leonidas

admits. "If I was a well person," she has been dancing the Boston for exactly sixteen minutes without halting to draw breath, "I should take some sublime trips around among these scenes. But I am quite too sick and fragile for strong exertion. It's my dyspepsia, you see, that's my trouble."

She is looking lovely as a dream. The darkness of the night seems reflected in her lustrous eyes, one diamonded hand clasps her lace mantilla across her throat, the other rests upon her partner's arm. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs by moonlight is more than pretty. She is poetic.

The mood of the Shelley-like young gentleman softens. It occurs to him, perhaps, that Nature, in some society, might be endured—a little longer than a fortnight. He hints at the loneliness of his partner's lot, at her quasi widowhood, at the evil effect of moral unhappiness upon a sensitive organization.

Mrs. Scipio Leonidas shakes her head; a quiver comes around her finely chiseled lips.

"It's more than half of it the diet," she remarks with feeling, and in a tone of deep earnestness. "The diet in these watering-place hotels is vile. That's about the keynote to my dyspeptic trouble. Look at my hand! Was ever such a bird's claw seen? My dresses fall off me. I'm positively obliged to give up wearing my marriage ring. My! yes, I wrote and told the colonel so, last mail. But what can you expect with such a *cuisine*? Why, to speak of oysters alone," says Mrs. Leonidas, warming up with her subject. "They give you what they call oysters certainly, poor shriveled tasteless bivalves, here in Europe. Think of them in New York!"

A look of soft and mournful retrospect crosses the lady's features; her voice modulates.

"You get those oysters with breakfast roasted on the half-shell, or deviled, or steamed. You get them as an appetizer before dinner, raw, luscious and juicy—my, yes! sweet, tender, portly. You get them at dinner, stewed, tossed up in crumbs, cooked in pies, put into sauces. You get them at all times, for about one franc, French money, the dozen. These regrets are weak, I know. It don't do in absence to talk about home." And something very like a tear shines in Mrs. Scipio's dark eyes. "But you see, sir, one's heart feels like overflowing at times.

Mountains and lakes, and traveling around may suit for a well person. A dyspeptic invalid wants a considerable deal more nourishment than can be taken out of handsome scenery."

And upon this, Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, delicate, ethereal-looking as moonlight itself, glides away upon her partner's arm into the deeper shadows of the terrace. At the same moment, the figures of John Farintyre and Mrs. Dormer come suddenly within the full glare of the salon windows. "You have returned, Joyce, darling," cries Mrs. Dormer, her voice moved by just a tremble of soft anxiety. "In spite of Mr. Farintyre's laughing at me, I was beginning to shiver at the thought of possible robbers and precipices."

"We did our best to get into danger," answers Joyce carelessly; "but, alas! in vain. It seems part of my fate always to be safe, over-safe. How did your *écarté* get on, mother?" she adds, as Farintyre and young Longmore stand face to face, in the true attitude of men who never mean to like each other, and without exchanging a word. "You have won half a dozen pairs of gloves, I hope, from Mr. Farintyre?"

"Mrs. Dormer has won a dozen and a half pairs of gloves of me," says Farintyre, in a tone that jars, inexplicably, on Hugh Longmore's ear.

Joyce's small feet twinkle a step or two, keeping time to the dance music within.

"Victor! Mamma and I wear the same size. When you write to Jouvin, ask my advice, Mr. Farintyre, as to the colors you shall order."

Mr. Farintyre does not answer. He stands, heavily shifting from one foot to the other. He makes a sorry attempt at whistling, looking steadily the while across Longmore's shoulder in the direction where Joyce Dormer is *not*.

As he stands thus, a stir of muslin flounces, a flutter of ribbons, make themselves heard at the nearest salon window. Aurora Skelton, disheveled from the dance, but partnerless, gives him a speaking glance through a fold of curtain.

And a quick, revolutionary movement stirs in poor John Farintyre's breast.

He is free: how many times a day has Joyce Dormer not

reminded him of the fact, on rainy days spent in Swiss inns, especially? What shall hinder him from striking out an original path of action? Why shall he not try reprisals, show this girl who makes his torture her amusement, that others can play the same game, enlist the same jealousies as herself? Why should he not invite Aurora Skelton to dance?

“Capital polka, that! Looks a tolerable floor, too,” he observes, moving somewhat nervously away from Mrs. Dormer as he produces a pair of gloves from his breast pocket and returns the glance of Aurora Skelton’s eyes with interest. “More than half a mind to go in for a turn—‘take the creases out of my knees,’ as the Californian young lady said in ‘Punch.’”

“You think of going *where*, Mr. Farintyre?” asks Joyce, advancing a perceptible inch or two, still in time with the music, in his direction.

John Farintyre repeats the joke, feeling that it does not sound more witty in the second edition. He makes some halting remark to the effect that gentlemen being scarce this evening, he, as a dancing man, ought to do his duty. Ladies seem to be standing out, and—

“Do you mean that you would condescend to dance, really and truly? Well, then,” cries Miss Dormer, as though moved by a sudden impulse, “I invite you to be my partner. We will have an extra dance of our own, here, on the greensward, and with the moon to light us. Do you refuse?”

In this moment Joyce is seduction personified. A smile—that rare delightful smile—irradiates the face upheld to Fairintyre’s; her hands (the odor of wild thyme, no doubt, still clinging to them) are clasped toward him in a gesture of mock entreaty; an aureole of yellow light shines round her blonde and graceful head.

Hugh Longmore says to himself with conviction that he detests her!

“I thought you made a point of not dancing extra dances, that *that* was one of your very few principles,” says Farintyre, ironically emphatic. “You have told me so, I am sure, pretty often—”

“In crowded London ball-rooms, no doubt I have. What mortal being could want to do more than stern duty at a London ball? In Clarens it is quite another thing.”

“You put principle aside, Miss Dormer, in Clarens?”

“So thoroughly, that I am a suppliant for the honor of Mr. Farintyre’s hand. Am I successful?”

And in another moment Farintyre’s arm encircles the girl’s slight waist. She rests her finger-tips upon his shoulder—ta-ra, lira goes the thumping polka tune on M. Scherer’s piano—and off they dance along the terrace, now receding out of sight, now reappearing amidst the stage like ebon and ivory effects of the moonlit garden.

Mrs. Dormer watches the two figures with serene absorption for some seconds, marking the polka-rhythm by one soft palm on the other. Then she remembers her good breeding, and young Hugh Longmore’s existence.

“Have you remarked the singular greenish color the lake puts on at night, Mr. Longmore? You can trace it at this moment like a river from Bouveret to Evian. Perhaps you would see what I mean if we were out of reach of gas-light.”

And across the terrace with noiseless, youthful tread, Joyce’s mother glides, Hugh Longmore, feeling a culpably lukewarm interest as to greenish coloring of the lake, following her.

“‘Clarens, sweet Clarens,’” repeats Mrs. Dormer presently. “‘Birthplace of deep love.’ Do you care for Lord Byron’s verse, or like most men of this generation, are you a believer in Browning only?”

Hugh Longmore cares little for verse of any kind: Latin hexameters and Greek iambics having drilled the taste out of him at as early an age as they drill it out of most English public-school boys. He confesses the truth: over-bluntly, perhaps.

“Well, I believe all the best poetry is, at this stage of the nineteenth century, written in prose. If poets like Goethe would only exercise their imaginations upon a basis of fact.”

Saying which Mrs. Dormer gives her companion a quick and comprehensive glance. A lad of his years who cares not for verse *must*, at the world’s present age, she decides, care for science. And (although Hugh Longmore, personally, may be regarded as detrimental, a good-looking human factor much better omitted from the present sum of Joyce’s love-affairs) fragmentary feminine science-talk is an accomplishment which Joyce’s mother can never refrain from exhibiting.

“When we came to Switzerland three weeks ago, we put

Tyndall's 'High Alps' and, of course, 'Childe Harold' into our portmanteaus. We have been reading the two books alternately, with a marked preference for the 'High Alps.' Byron's raptures about mountains and glaciers seem tawdrily theatrical, side by side with the plain speaking of the man of science. You remember that magnificent passage in which the sun is called the sculptor of the Alps? 'It was he who raised aloft the waters which cut out these ravines, he who planted the glaciers on the mountain slopes, he who, acting through the ages, will finally lay these mountains low, so that the people of an older earth shall see mold spread and corn wave over the rocks which, at this moment, bear the weight of the Jungfrau.' "

Mrs. Dormer's sparkling, dimpled face has grown grave, as with trained tone and delivery she makes the quotation. Thought is in her eyes, a tremble of emotion round her mouth. Had this young undergraduate's taste inclined toward Rousseauism she could, with her talent of lending herself entirely to the moment, have recited for him the necessary half-dozen stanzas from "Childe Harold;" have recited them with an interest in self-torturing sophistry, fevered lips, and beautiful madness, as warm as that which she now expends on glaciers and on mountains.

But Hugh Longmore, whatever his belief in his own knowledge of the world, is, at heart, no cynic. Hugh Longmore, unversed in the little feints and doubtings of intellectual coquetry, never doubts that Mrs. Dormer's love for geological learning and scientific prediction is sincere.

And John Farintyre a short quarter of an hour ago believed the same: of course with the unimportant substitution of pigeon-shooting for geology, as the object of Mrs. Dormer's enthusiasm!

CHAPTER VI.

TOO DEEP FOR TEARS.

"You see, mamma, your liking is at second-hand. The clew to much fine philosophy may be found in that. If I had a sister or a cousin, placed as I am placed, depend upon it I could be attached to Mr. John Farintyre, vicariously!"

"We can most of us like where and how we choose, Joyce. Take me for an instance. I was not romantically

attached to your papa when first we were engaged, when first we were married even."

"And afterward!" cries Joyce, opening her blue eyes wide.

As long as the girl can remember anything, her parents, divided by a quarter of a century in age, have lived heroically apart; Mr. Dormer writing charming little lover-like letters to his absent wife, Mrs. Dormer constantly on her dutiful road to join her husband and his tea-pots in Italy—but apart, nevertheless.

"Afterward, child, I exercised myself strenuously in the most precious virtue a woman can possess or practice—toleration. Your poor father's artistic tastes—(I am quite ready to admit the delicacy of his health)—drew him toward the soft do-nothingness of a Southern life. By an effort of will I early put myself so much in his place as to imagine that—for Mr. Dormer—such an existence might be the highest possible! Quite other duties lay to my hand, Joyce. I had to think of you. When you were little, it was needful to live in climates," notably London and Paris, unless Joyce's memory be at fault, "where English children thrive. Later on, I had to think of masters and governesses; later still, to keep up old connections, to form new friends. To the best of my power I fulfilled my duties, both as wife and mother; guided, enlightened, always by one principle, that of toleration."

"You have an even temper, mamma," says Joyce, a little remorsefully. "I have not. You can put up in others, in John Farintyre, for example, with all the qualities most unlike your own. I can not. And besides, mother—yes, you have told me so yourself"—for a moment Joyce's fair face blazes from temple to throat then grows white again—"although you were not, as you say, romantically in love with my father, you never cared for any one else. Toleration, remember, may have come to you through other channels than it does, or ever can, come to me."

The village clocks along the lake shore one after another have struck midnight, the lights are extinguished in Hotel Scherer, the revelers at rest. But Mrs. Dormer and Joyce still linger at the open window of their sitting-room. A certain look upon the faces of both—of pained entreaty, despite its power, on the girl's, of cool determination, despite its smoothness, on the mother's—betokens that their talk

is of other things than charities, calling-cards, art, music, or even the last shape of bonnet with which we are threatened for the winter.

“Too much ‘caring,’ as you express it, for another ends in not caring enough for one’s self. You ought to have learned that bitter truth.”

“Did I ever say I had not learned it, mother?”

“I do not see that you carry the lesson into practice. If on the threshold of life a girl chance to fall into any—well,” hesitates Mrs. Dormer, vainly seeking a euphemistic phrase—“any deplorable sentimental mischief, it should, if she be wise, and when the first smart is over, become a stepping-stone, not a stumbling-block, for the rest of her days.”

“It seems to me I am very wise,” says Joyce. “Although the first smart of the sentimental mischief, after more than two years, is not over! In what way am I open to the charge of not caring enough for myself? My life is one long selfishness.”

“You care, seriously and deeply, for nothing—except, of course, your violin-playing,” remarks Mrs. Dormer, with an accent of quite unwonted humor. “Think of Sir Kenneth Grant—of your levity—”

“Mother,” interrupts the girl, turning briefly round, then standing so that the two face each other full, “if we are to have recriminations let us also have plain speaking. I accepted Sir Kenneth at a time when reason was dead in me. My heart was breaking over my great sorrow—yes, my heart was breaking, though I wore no black, and went to operas and balls and garden-parties through it all. And Sir Kenneth Grant was kind and so old—papa’s age, or more! And I thought, God help me, he would look for no love of *that* kind from me, and you said that once married I should forget my pain—”

“And when the wedding orders had been given,” observes Mrs. Dormer, coldly, as the words die on Joyce’s passionate lips, “and when the marriage settlements were drawn out you told Sir Kenneth, one of my oldest, dearest friends, that you held it would be better to die, yes, and that you besought Heaven, night and morning, for death, sooner than that you should stand before the altar as his wife.”

“Sir Kenneth himself gave me an opening,” exclaims Joyce, with a face of marble. “He came upon me sudden-

ly one morning—have I not told you the story before? Sir Kenneth came in, unannounced, just as I was trying, through my tears, to look over some jewels that he had sent for me to choose from. And when he asked me the meaning of my tears, I answered him truly. You know the rest. You know how he was good and loyal and pitiful enough to absolve me of my word.”

“And poor young Vesey Armytage?”

“Poor young Vesey Armytage was, really, and in fact, an admirer of yours, mamma,” cries the girl, but in a lighter voice. “I will not be made responsible for Vesey Armytage’s blighted happiness.”

“And now, John Farintyre?”

“And now, John Farintyre. Mother, why this tragic tone? John Farintyre likes, it would seem, to travel about the world in our wake, carrying our shawls and losing our tickets and our luggage at the railway-stations, and hearing harsh things said to himself from morning till night. If, after seeing a great deal of each other, I do not grow to dislike him very much more, and if, as years go on, I decide on marrying at all, it is a settled thing between Mr. Farintyre and myself, that—we should begin to think over the question of becoming engaged in earnest.”

Mrs. Dormer’s cheek kindles; a flash of the eyes makes one understand how Mr. Dormer has found it in his heart to live apart from this angelic little wife of his during a good three fourths of his married life.

“John Farintyre has more brain and more heart than you give him credit for, Joyce. He was talking to me, seriously, this evening, about a matter he has not courage to touch upon to you. If you could have seen his face after you had started with Mr. Longmore for your lesson in astronomy,” adds Mrs. Dormer with emphasis, “you would realize, perhaps, that John Farintyre’s patience may, one day, come to an end.”

“I thought John Farintyre honestly and truly preferred playing cards with you. John Farintyre does not know one star from another. He does not care for pine woods and mountain wild-flowers, and talk about Beethoven by moonlight. His friend, Mr. Longmore, does. Such a nice boy, Mr. Longmore is, mamma, and without a shilling in the world, he tells me, unless some day or other he should be able to work for one. I wonder,” says Joyce musingly,

“why the people I like are invariably people without a shilling.”

“Do you mean to say that you ‘like’ this exceedingly commonplace, stiff-jointed undergraduate, after half an hour’s acquaintance?”

“I feel that I could make a companion of Mr. Longmore, certainly. Why do you smile, mother?”

“I was thinking of some of your mistakes, child!—of the people all over Europe you have felt positive would be companionable,” says Mrs. Dormer mildly, “until—you grew tired of them.”

Joyce walks restlessly away from her mother’s side.

“That is the worst thing of all, ‘until I grew tired.’ Ay, and I grow tired of everything, except of my Stradivarius, which does not belong much to our outward life. It is useless, I am afraid, mother, this searching into the faults of my character. There is a fatal warp in me. I know it. On the day I lost happiness, something in myself, ay, in my very heart, was lost too. Mr. Farintyre must be content to make the best of me, faults and all, or to leave me.”

“Do you wish him to leave you, Joyce? Be honest. Would you have been content this evening, even, for him to join the dancers in the salon—to join them,” adds Mrs. Dormer, “with a Miss Aurora Skelton, a partner too low for possible rivalry?”

Joyce reflects for some moments before answering:

“If John Farintyre were to marry some person better suited to him than I—say, if he were to marry Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity—I should feel relieved. Fancy, *never* hearing the jingle of the Farintyre money again? As long—well, as long as things remain as they are—as long as the only son of the house thinks fit to run about the world in our society—I prefer seeing him at his best. He would not have shown to his best in the too congenial atmosphere of a Swiss hotel ball.”

“I am pained by your tone, Joyce: Lady Joan Majendie assures me that the Farintyres are a most excellent family.”

“Mother!”

“John Farintyre’s great-grandfather, Mr. Duncan Farintyre, was a Scotch laird living at the end of the last century on his father’s small estate, in—in Peebles, I think—somewhere.”

“Lady Joan’s family histories want backbone. Must

not everybody's great-grandfather at the end of the last century have been living on his father's small estate—Somewhere?"

"But in the general social disruption that followed," says Mrs. Dormer, with large vagueness, "upon the first French revolution, Duncan Farintyre, like hundreds of other gentlemen's sons, had to seek his fortune, to sustain the family name, in business. How the good blood has displayed itself since, how honorably the Farintyres, step by step, have made their way, is proved by the brilliant fortune of the present head of the firm. On the score of cultivation, everything has been done for the son that Eton and Oxford *can* do."

"That is not saying much for Eton and Oxford. John Farintyre rode the best horses of any man in his college, was celebrated for his ratting successes, and got sent down twice for practical wit with screw-drivers and paint-pots. Also, not having passed mods. by the end of his eighth term of residence, he was asked by those in authority to remove himself elsewhere. You look skeptical, mother. We will use Mr. Farintyre's own words in speaking of this part of his career: 'Was humbugged out of Oxford by the dons.'"

"I know too well what your tone means," cries Mrs. Dormer, with chill displeasure. "I know too well how these hypercritical judgments are likely to end. You will keep John Farintyre (or John Farintyre's successor) in a state of cruel suspense for years, caring not so much for him as you would care for a dog who had been trained to fetch and carry obediently. Then when the best part of a woman's life, when the bloom of your youth is wasted—"

"John Farintyre (or John Farintyre's successor) will throw me over, and you, mamma, will have a crabbed, disappointed daughter looking a dozen years older than yourself, upon your hands. Never mind, little mother," adds Joyce lightly, "if our fortunes come to the lowest ebb, there will be Stradivarius. My music masters have all told me I could make a name as an artist. We will leave 'a name' alone. I could earn a living, probably, by going out to play dance-music—violin, harp and French horn—at evening parties."

A scene of the kind I am describing is rare exceedingly between Mrs. Dormer and Joyce. So superficially alike,

that their every-day tastes and wishes are identical, so unlike, in truth, that each can barely guess at the other's deeper feelings, this mother and daughter continually approximate, yet, like certain geometrical lines known to mathematicians, never blend.

When the polished surface of their lives does become ruffled, when a conversation by accident takes a pungently personal turn, or a situation borders on the dramatic, Mrs. Dormer on the instant rises to vantage-ground.

Is it not a commonplace in domestic politics that a certain engaging and lachrymose weakness of manner shall always triumph over dry-eyed moral strength? What weapons can not a soft little woman with "weeps" at command bring against an antagonist who loves her, and whose own emotions happen to lie too deep for tears?

"You confess that there is a warp in your character, that you have lost hope in life, that you care persistently for nothing. I know, I feel it. Ah, Joyce, and when you were little, was ever a child so quite too pathetically loving!" Here the large, over-innocent gray eyes reach suffusion-point. "I was very ill, once, when you were five or six years old, and I was of course alone. With all his pleasantness of temper, with all his very genuine amiability, the witnessing of suffering in others was distasteful then, as now, to your poor father. Well, you stretched yourself outside across the door (I was quite affected at what the nurse told me afterward), you declared you would not eat, would not be moved, dead or living, till you saw my face. Ah, and your joy when I got better! How you threw your dear little arms around my neck—how—"

But Mrs. Dormer's utterance is choked. Tears are coursing down the fair cheeks on which eight-and-thirty years have left no disfiguring trace; and in another moment Joyce, on her knees, is at her mother's side.

"Mamma, I love you, as I have always done. What have I on the earth to love but you? Forgive me!" And quickly contrite, she covers Mrs. Dormer's hand with kisses. "Tell me only what you wish, and I will try, if I have sufficient strength, to obey. Oh, why can not we be all in all to each other, as we used to be in the happy light-hearted years when I was a girl?"

"Before Roger Tryan came between us," exclaims Mrs. Dormer, adroitly introducing, in her emotion, a name she

seldom has courage to mention in cold blood. "And sometimes you wonder that—in my poor mother's heart—I cherish so much bitterness against that man!"

The aim is clever; the mark overshot. Joyce is sensible of a recoil of feeling, a certain uncomfortable suspicion of stage effect. She rises promptly from her knees.

"I wonder at nothing, mamma. I know that vain regrets do not kill, that I may have to live another forty or fifty years, and to make the best of them: to wake and sleep and dine and dress, and be as other people. It seems a necessity that some man's peace shall be risked by my marrying," she adds after a little pause. "Well, money can buy—not happiness, but the means of forgetting one is unhappy. If sacrifice there must be, as well select a rich victim, John Farintyre or another."

"Would not such things as these be better unsaid, Joyce?"

"I think not, mother. The time is coming on when I may have perforce," once more a marble whiteness overcomes the youthful blood-hues of her cheeks, "to be dumb! Let us be sincere, now, accustom ourselves to look evil in the face, but never pretend we think evil good. You have been talking this evening with John Farintyre about a subject that he has not courage to broach to me, himself. What is it?"

Mrs. Dormer's answer is given with infinite tact, with gentleness, with delicacy, with the lightest ornamental touch of tears: tears that might be compared to the *fioritura* of Italian song, superadded notes, airily falling on the central melodic figure! But Joyce knows, were it only by the deadness of her own heart, that in that soft and flowery answer is couched an ultimatum.

"John Farintyre pleads but for one encouraging word," remarks Mrs. Dormer suavely. "Every detail of his fate is to be left in your hands. You are both so young! An engagement of some months might be a really wise test of the fidelity of both. At the end of those months, we shall, I hope, be in Rome—"

"Having wintered at Nice on our road!" interrupts the girl, with meaning even Mrs. Dormer can not disregard. "And near Nice lies Monte Carlo, and to the gambling-tables of Monte Carlo come visitors. As you have broken the ice yourself, mamma, you must not be angry with me

for mentioning Roger Tryan's name. Did you ever hear that he arrived in Nice a very short time after you and I had left, last winter?"

Joyce asks the question with an obvious effort. Turning her head aside, she makes a pretense of consulting the time-piece on a neighboring mantel-shelf.

"Last winter?—let me think! Yes, of course. Lady Joan Majendie did mention in one of her letters that Mr. Tryan, with his friends, the Pintos, was spending the spring in Nice. Very deplorable whispers, too," adds Mrs. Dormer, with soft asperity, "were current as to poor Mr. Tryan's card losses! As long as he did not gamble, one might trust—trust in his reformation! But as Lady Joan says—"

"Could a man not play, as girls occasionally go to balls and garden-parties, out of sheer weariness of spirit?"

"I am no casuist, Joyce. I believe wrong to be wrong, and Roger Tryan *lost*."

Mrs. Dormer is in earnest. Her accents all but rise to tragedy.

"You class him with his associates, in short?"

"I desire to think neither of him nor of them. I do not see what connection persons like these can have with the subject of which we are speaking."

"Persons like these might chance to return to Nice another winter."

"And even if they did so! Surely, child, you would not wish me to change our plans because there is a remote prospect of coming across Mr. Roger Tryan and Mrs. Pinto?"

At this cruel, intentional juxtaposition of names, Joyce winces, like one in bodily pain.

"Not only would I keep to our plans, mother; if opportunity came, I would seek, once again in this mortal life, to meet and speak with Roger Tryan. Has he ever had an actual honest chance of righting himself with me? That question forces itself upon my mind pretty often."

"When a man's conduct proves him faithless, one would be disposed to value his protestations lightly. You could scarcely wish to hear," says Mrs. Dormer, "that, next to the society of Captain and Mrs. Pinto, and roulette, Roger Tryan still likes you best?"

Joyce Dormer raises her eyes, a look of piteous entreaty in their blue depths, to her mother's.

"No, mamma. It would be a kind of death to hear that! I have had experience. I know, too well, that there can be no second-best in love."

"And I may give, at least, a gleam of hope to John Farintyre?"

"Tell him to hope wisely. It is the friendliest word that can be spoken to him."

"I shall deliver the message intact, knowing well," cries Mrs. Dormer archly, "what bright interpretation the poor fellow's heart will put upon it. You would feel happier yourself, Joyce, were the future more settled. We are to be in Rome by March. Let it be a fixed thing that the wedding shall take place after Easter."

"Or all thoughts of the wedding be finally and forever given up. The conditions are just on both sides." These are Joyce's last words as the mother and daughter part for the night. "I shall be twenty-one in the second week of April, old enough, certainly, to know my own mind! And if I *can*—be sure you use the word, italicized, when you speak to Mr. Farintyre—if I *can*, I will say 'yes' to him."

She runs upstairs with a buoyancy that her mother, easily hopeful, is fair to take as an auspicious omen, the burden of "*Carmen, mia Carmen adorata*," upon her lips. But deep on in the night, when the moon has sunk chill behind the snow-tops of the Savoy Mountains, when Mrs. Dormer, warm asleep, is dreaming the good dreams of a conscience and digestion at rest, Joyce, at her open window keeps vigil, her heart in revolt, a passion of dumb longing on her face.

"When a man's conduct has proved him faithless, one would be disposed to value his protestations lightly."

No disputing the truth of copy-book aphorisms. And yet, if she might come across her old sweetheart's path, hear Roger Tryan's voice, feel his hand-clasp, it seems, in this hour, to Joyce Dormer's illogical mind, that she could die content.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARLOTTE AND WERTHER.

DURING the next five days Hugh Longmore sees, hears, tastes, with quickened senses. Mountain and lake and sky

look bluer to him, music sounds more musical, the thin Swiss wine served round at M. Scherer's table is as nectar.

In these five days is compressed the greatest happiness of his life, a happiness so thorough, he tells himself, 'tis impossible he can be undergoing that series of morbid changes often philosophically watched by him in other men, and which are the sure forerunners of the great unhappiness, love! The first sound that greets him in the morning is Joyce's violin practice, his room, surely by providential arrangement, being in the same wing of the hotel as Mrs. Dormer's apartments. His first vision is of Joyce herself on the balcony, her blonde head shining in the eastern sun, as she spreads out a breakfast of crumbs for the sparrows—those delightful, familiar sparrows that are a specialty of Clarens. On such occasions, especially I fear if Mr. Farintyre be hovering nigh (black jealousy at his heart, a blacker pipe between his lips), she will throw down a passion-flower or rose, or sprig of jasmine to the young Oxonian; and when she does so, be assured that Longmore would change places with no crowned head in Europe! After this, the sparrows being dismissed, books and papers are brought out, and the ladies "study."

Poring, or seeming to pore, over his Greek tragedy, in some shaded corner of the terrace, Longmore will catch an occasional tone of Miss Dormer's voice as she reads aloud from the "Fortnightly," or the "Nineteenth Century," or an article in the "Times," or the "Revue des deux Mondes," or perhaps, the "Lancet." Who knows better than Mrs. Dormer the amount and scope of reading that a life of gracefully intellectual nomadism demands? By and by, an early lunch over, comes the afternoon's excursion, to-day around the lake, to-morrow to Glion, the next to Geneva excursions in which, by seeming hazard, always, young Hugh Longmore is asked to join. And then there are the evenings—moonlighted, cloudless, suave—evenings made odorous by flowers, poetized by music, lifted curiously beyond the level of the lad's hitherto prosaic English experience, by the society of the two fair women who have so suddenly held out to him the hand of fellowship.

In after times, it may well be that Longmore shall look back on Clarens with disrelish; shall remember the lake and its lateen sails, the terrace and its roses, the balcony and the girlish head that used to lean across its balustrade,

with disgust rather than tenderness. Once let next morning's headache set in, and few men recall the sparkling primeval gayety engendered by hock or champagne with zest. But for these five days, in spite of common sense perpetually hinting to him that he is in a fool's paradise, in spite of Farintyre's uncongenial presence, in spite of the fact that Mrs. and Miss Dormer will start for Como next Saturday, young Hugh Longmore dreams out his dream, and is contented.

For five days; on the fifth, mainly through Miss Aurora Skelton's agency, comes the chill process of awakening, some four-and-twenty hours earlier than, in the natural course of events, it need have done.

Under the first smart of Longmore's defalcation, poor Aurora's policy resolved itself into one of compromise. She essayed the appeal, direct—in two flats. Would he not come back to her, Douglas, Douglas? Aurora would ask, at the summit of her voice, whenever Douglas ventured within ear-shot of the crazy salon piano. Receiving no answer, she essayed rice-powdered cheeks, Aurora's nearest possible approach to sentimental pallor, essayed banter, pouting, coyness: all in vain. At length, guided by the superior tact of Diana—if Pansy, oh, ye curates, have the virtue, and Aurora, oh, ye men of the world, the beauty, has not Diana, oh, ye seekers after culture, the intellect of the family?—guided and sustained by the superior wisdom of Diana, the younger Miss Skelton bethought herself of a new line of conduct: of Mr. John Farintyre, of reprisals. Abandoning guerilla warfare, she determined to carry the campaign straight into the very camp of the enemy. We shall see with what success.

“This long talked-of expedition to Chillon has not come off yet, it seems.” Mr. Farintyre is the speaker, looking hot and uncomfortable, like a man at odds with his conscience. “And the moon is just at her full. Let us see! To-day is Friday. You threaten to start for the Italian lakes to-morrow evening. Now, what decent excuse could be found—I'm sure I don't know how to invent one—for not going to Chillon to-night with all these ladies?”

“An excuse for not going to Chillon with ladies!” exclaims Joyce, looking round at him with an air of pleasant surprise. She is drinking afternoon tea with her mother

and Farintyre on the terrace; young Longmore, by accident, absent. "Mother, is it possible that you have been planning moonlight boating-parties without my consent? This sort of wild conduct must be looked to."

Redder and redder grows the guilty face of poor John Farintyre.

"It is a party got up, you see, by some of the other ladies in the hotel—not a boating-party at all. An excursion steamer from Lausanne is to stop at the Clarens landing-place and take us on to Chillon. I spoke—or rather she spoke—I mean Longmore introduced me to—ah—um—to Miss Aurora Skelton, the second evening I was here, and—"

"And you have been improving the acquaintance ever since," observed Joyce, in a voice soft, unthreatening as the lake breeze among the roses. "I believe I saw the lady talking to you, did I not, as you smoked your third pipe this morning? A lady with black eyes, damask cheeks, and a hearty laugh? Yes. And so, you and Miss Aurora Skelton are planning a moonlight expedition to Chillon for this evening?"

There is something in the rippling acquiescence of Joyce's tone that Mrs. Dormer likes not.

"This evening will be our last in Clarens, Mr. Farintyre. I had intended to take a drive in the direction of Ouchy."

"Mother," cries Joyce decisively, "Chillon by moonlight is a thing to be done; Cook's coupons include the steamer fare, and Murray, I forget the exact page, supplies the needful 'Childe Harold.' You have, of course, accepted Miss Aurora Skelton's invitation, Mr. Farintyre?"

"The invitation was from Mrs. Skelton and Mrs. Colonel Scipio Leonidas Briggs—jolly little American woman, you know, with the eyes and the Spanish mantilla," says Farintyre, looking more and more miserable. "They passed by the smoking-room window this morning, all of them together, and asked me. And the Skeltons' brother has arrived, T. S., as they call him—an outrageous little cad he is, too—and Miss Aurora added, as there were ladies in my party—"

"In your party!"

The exclamation comes in staccatoed accents, from Mrs. Dormer.

"Well, no, I don't mean that; she said as I had arrived

the same day with Mrs. and Miss Dormer she—they—would be glad if—” a look in Joyce’s blue eyes causes the words to freeze on his lips—“if you would excuse the shortness of the notice, and join the expedition.”

“I think, mamma,” says the young girl, giving Mrs. Dormer a brief, suggestive glance, “that the answer would come more fittingly from you. These ladies, with whom Mr. Farintyre has A Smoking Acquaintance, are civil enough, through Mr. Farintyre, to invite us on board one of the Lausanne excursion steamers; shall we accept?”

“It is impossible that Mr. Farintyre can be in earnest,” says Mrs. Dormer, failing to see humor in the situation. “An overture that one can not call well-bred was made to him. His moral courage may have given way for the moment, but—”

“Mr. Farintyre is thoroughly in earnest—are you not, Mr. Farintyre? You have every intention of accompanying Miss Aurora Skelton and her friends to Chillon to-night?”

“I don’t see how a fellow could get out of such a thing,” answers John Farintyre sheepishly. “All very well to talk of ‘moral courage,’ sitting here, like this, protected—I mean, of course, with you and Mrs. Dormer. A girl meets you on the staircase, out in the garden, at the door of the smoking-room. Dash it all! A girl meets you *everywhere*, and puts the question to you plump. ‘Was I engaged for this evening, or was I not?’ Miss Skelton said!”

“And you answered truthfully, that you were not,” observes Joyce approvingly. “If any one, meeting me constantly, on staircases, in gardens, at the doors of smoking-rooms, were to ask me plump, ‘Was I engaged or was I not?’ I should display just the same want of moral courage as you did, Mr. Farintyre. I should answer emphatically: ‘Not.’”

Dark gathers the cloud in a moment on John Farintyre’s low forehead.

His regard for Joyce Dormer is, doubtless, after a fashion sincere. Still, could one analyze this regard (in the promised moral laboratory of the future, say, that laboratory wherein the ultimate elements of human character shall be chemically tested), it would prove to be made up of somewhat doubtful ingredients. Joyce Dormer is fair, well-born, gifted. Joyce Dormer is also, or has the reputation of being, hard to win; and John Farintyre’s vanity is flat-

tered by the vision of unsuccessful predecessors. But, in his heart of hearts, he is afraid of her, ever ready to misconstrue her kindest smiles, to detect a latent irony in her sweetest speech.

A man in choosing a wife should seek to better his connection. A man who marries an actress loses caste forever. These are the doctrines in which Farintyre's newly enriched, stanchly conservative parents have reared him, the doctrines upon which he is now dutifully acting. And yet—the thought crosses him a dozen times a day—if social prejudice were less rigid, if Rosie Lascelles were inside the pale of eligibility, how joyful might be his wooing of her, how smooth their married life!

For Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity, mentally and morally, is on his own level. And although some exceptional women may prefer the tiptoe attitude in love, men of the caliber of Mr. John Farintyre do not.

“There is no need for you to make these confessions, Miss Dormer. Your actions show, plain enough, that you consider yourself a free agent.”

“Free as air,” responds Joyce gayly, “and with no prospect of becoming fettered. I wonder how you and I can console ourselves this evening, mamma, while all the world goes to Chillon? Mr. Longmore shall offer a suggestion.”

The young Oxonian, his good-looking face glowing after an icy swim in the lake, makes his appearance at this critical moment; and Mrs. Dormer pours out a cup of tea for him with more cordiality than her wont.

A passionless observer of human character stands on somewhat the same vantage-ground as the political leader of a minority. Both are vested with the sacred irresponsibility of opposition. Mrs. Dormer is absolutely passionless. She watches the moral twists and turnings of her fellow-mortals with less emotion than many naturalists feel as they watch the movements of the creatures in an aquarium. Hence, probably, the soundness of her judgments. At the first signs of insurrection shown by Mr. John Farintyre, that young Croesus must, she decides, be made to feel himself in the cold. She reads the weak, ungenerous temper far too accurately to try conciliation, as her own finer tact and culture might prompt her to do in the case of a differently molded man.

John Farintyre must be made to feel himself in the cold. A cup of tea is poured out graciously for Hugh Longmore. Joyce, with an air of business, sets herself to the cutting of bread and butter. For afternoon tea in M. Scherer's establishment is a reality, not a pretense.

"Are you not reminded of the great bread and butter scene in 'Werther'?" She smiles at Longmore with her eyes rather than her lips as she asks him this. "We have got the lake, the mountains, the bread and the butter."

"And certainly the Charlotte," adds Longmore, overlooking Farintyre's presence. "But where is Albert?"

The brow of the man of shares grows darker. He draws forth a tobacco pouch from his breast pocket.

"You have an *intermittent* dislike, I know, Mrs. Dormer, for tobacco smoke." Under the influence of jealous temper John Farintyre almost utters a sarcasm. "So I may as well take myself off. Miss Dormer and Mr. Longmore, evidently, have mutual acquaintance to talk over."

"Mutual acquaintance!" cries Joyce, clapping her slender white hands. "Oh, this is delightful! Mr. Farintyre, after all the culture of Eton and Oxford, do you not know who Charlotte and Albert are?"

"Of course I don't, and I have no curiosity to," says Farintyre, savagely ungrammatical. "All of us are free as air—you reminded me of that just now—free, Miss Dormer, to make as many or as few new acquaintances as suits us."

"But these are intimate friends, people we have known for years."

Never has Longmore seen Joyce in a mood at once so dangerous and so tantalizing. She turns her face, lighted with archness that is more bewitching than a smile, full upon Farintyre.

"Charlotte and Albert are characters in a novel, sir! Goethe's 'Sorrows of Werther.' *You never read it?*—never read the book that, a hundred years ago, set half the gilded youth in Europe thinking of suicide?"

If any man in real life ever made use of the expression written down in old-fashioned plays and romances as "Pshaw!" I should say it was John Farintyre at this moment. Turning upon his heel, he moves some paces away from the rest, and there stands, surveying the blue expanse of lake, with eyes that in reality see only the mocking

girlish face of Joyce Dormer, the compressed smile, that he, Farintyre, construes into one of irony, around the lips of Longmore.

“We are going to spend quite a lonely forsaken evening, mamma and I,” remarks the voice that Mr. Farintyre loves and hates alternately. “There is some moonlight expedition, Mr. Longmore, got up by the ladies in this house, to which all the world is going—you, perhaps, among the rest?”

“I think not,” answers young Hugh Longmore. “Some one in the hotel was good enough to write me a note of invitation, but—”

“You found it possible to get out of the way of temptation?” interrupts Joyce. “Or had you actually moral courage enough to plead a previous engagement?”

“I refused, Miss Dormer, without excuse or extenuation. If the whole duty of man requires one to visit Chillon by moonlight, at least let the visit be got through alone.”

“Ah, this is disappointing to our hopes. If you had not used the word ‘alone’ we might have thrown ourselves on your compassion. My mother and I will be left to our own resources to-night—Mr. Farintyre, of course, going with the crowd! And so, as you are a good rower, I thought, perhaps, you would take us out, just far enough to get a distant view of Chillon from the lake. What do you say, mamma?”

To Joyce’s surprise Mrs. Dormer is acquiescent; prognosticates neither sore throats, low fever, storms, brigands, nor Mrs. Grundy. And John Farintyre, anathematizing woman’s frailty in his soul, is forced to listen, with what grace he may, while the evening’s programme is canvassed in detail. By and by comes a suggestion, originating obliquely from Joyce, that every one’s “Byron” would be the better for rubbing up. How if Mr. Longmore should read aloud the “Prisoner of Chillon”? There will be ample time for him to do so between this and dinner, while she and her mother work.

“Charming! I will run for the book at once,” cries Mrs. Dormer, rising with youthful vivacity to her feet. John Farintyre, cynical and jealous, feels convinced that the scene has been rehearsed between Mrs. and Miss Dormer beforehand. The most innocent, unpremeditated word savors to his jaundiced moral perception of “tag.” “Will

you be idle or work your tapestry, dear child? Work your tapestry. Then I will bring it out for you with my own knitting, and the 'Prisoner.'"

And five minutes later Longmore is clearing his throat, looking red, and feeling about as happy as he felt on the first occasion when he stood in the presence of Oxford examiners, while his companions, cool, fresh as the roses that grow about their heads, are settling themselves to work.

If all the pretty things men of genius have written about women and needles could be collected on a page together, the picture of Mrs. and Miss Dormer at this moment would offer a fair apology for their extravagance. The elder lady's work is a stocking of softest pearl gray silk, precisely at the stage of development—does it ever, I wonder, get beyond that stage?—when you may say, "there is a stocking," yet when no vulgar anatomical suggestions distress the eye. Joyce, with a very bright needle, and a very long thread, stitches dreamily at a scroll of mediæval tapestry, worked and sold at South Kensington, with a minimum portion of grounding to be finished by the buyer—an enigmatic, low-toned mediæval scroll, in perfect artistic keeping with the sober-tinted dress on which it rests, and the fair and serious face that bends above it.

" 'My hair is gray, but not with years.' "

So Longmore begins, with well-trained cadence, his voice sufficiently moved by boyish diffidence to give the reading enhanced interest. And the swallows circle low above the sultry lake, the boatmen's lateen sails droop motionless. Mr. John Farintyre, pipe in mouth, paces up and down a neighboring path (the fall of his footstep furnishing no inappropriate refrain to the story of the poem), gloomily speculating as he walks.

Joyce Dormer has aroused his vanity rather than conquered his senses. The Rubens coloring, the ample outlines of a Rosie Lascelles, nay, even the coarser charms of an Aurora Skelton, are, in very truth, on a nearer level with his tastes, than the blonde ethereal graces of the girl whose pleasure it has been, during the past three months, to inthrall and torture him alternately.

This side the altar, chances of failure still giving ardor to pursuit, such capricious, bitter-sweet relationship as exists between them, may be tolerable. But afterward?

What kind of future lies stored up for him? What are his own personal chances of happiness? What companionship can he hope for in a wife whose heart died with the loss of her first lover—candidly did she confess that truth to him in the earliest hour, when he hinted to her of his own passion—a wife whose tastes are divided between music, which he honestly dislikes, and books, of which he never willingly reads a line?

“One event, at least, is certain,” decided Mr. Farintyre, barbarously cutting off a carnation head with the point of his cane, “departure from Clarens. The successes of this young puppy, Longmore, of Corpus, draw to a close. Let him talk of Albert and Charlotte, read his Byron, go in for attitude while he may.” The lad is lying outstretched, in quiet, unconscious picturesqueness, upon the terrace at the ladies’ feet. “It is his final score. Longmore of Corpus and Miss Dormer will have no more starlit walks, will spend no more long *intellectual* hours in each other’s society, while they live.”

In which prediction John Farintyre, as events turn out, proves singularly wrong.

Throughout the afternoon the air continues warm to oppressiveness. The sun sets above Ouchy in a bank of copper-colored cloud. The wind sinks lower and lower. M. Scherer, shaking his head as he taps the fast-falling barometer at the hall-door, warns such of his guests as it may concern, of certainly approaching storm from the Jura mountains. All the time, however, the lake lies tranquil; the sky, save on that western horizon, looks blue and settled. And so, when the Lausanne steamer is duly telegraphed at the appointed hour, it comes to pass that M. Scherer is pronounced a false prophet, and that the moon-worshippers with Mrs. Skelton and her daughters as commanders-in-chief, get under way.

A quarter of an hour later Joyce Dormer and her mother are waiting on the little Clarens jetty while Longmore brings round his boat. The banks of western cloud have become more and more copper-colored. The lake glows like one vast mirror of burnished steel. The stillness is a thing to be felt.

“We ought to have listened to our landlord,” remarks Mrs. Dormer, whose face has lost its smiles. — “It might be amusing to tease poor John Farintyre by the threat of

starting, but there is such a thing as carrying a practical joke too far. Our wisest course now is to turn back while we can. Madness to think of going on the water at such an hour, and with such a sky over our heads!" adds Mrs. Dormer, with a shudder.

She possesses, I should say, as much stout courage as any woman of her weight in Europe. Ask lawyers, with whom at odd times she has had to deal, ask creditors, ask society at large and her husband's family in committee, if little Mrs. Dormer can not display nerve on occasion.

The wilder moods of nature interest her moderately. Storms, theories of storms, may have, like glaciers, to be studied for conversational purposes. But are not all such subjects better "got up" out of a science text-book than from experience? Mrs. Dormer, in short, has not one poetic fiber belonging to her. In fairness, it may be added that, even on a lake, Mrs. Dormer is liable to seasickness. "If this is madness, who would choose to be sane?" exclaims Joyce. "The sky is simply glorious, mother, all the more so for its uncertain promise. Look at those black and amber streaks along Jura! Look at the moon above those masses of dappled marble cloud, at that solitary star shining over the Dent de Jaman! It is just the moment the German storm-song tells of—the moment when the Sturm-geist holds his breath before bursting his chains asunder."

Even as Joyce speaks, a moan sweeps across the surface of the lake. The willows along a neighboring embankment give a menacing shiver. There is a second's breathless silence; and then—a long, low rattle of thunder reverberates from peak to peak, among the far-off mountains.

"Mr. Longmore, I make my appeal to you!" cries Mrs. Dormer, as Hugh Longmore pulls in sight, round the head of the little landing-place. "In boating questions one really looks upon an Oxford or Cambridge man as *infallible*. Do you consider it perfectly safe for us to venture forth?"

"Perfectly safe!" interposes Joyce. "My dear mother, for what human undertaking that is pleasant can perfect safety be guaranteed? We shall be in no greater danger than all the honest souls who have gone to Chillon before us in the steamer."

"It will be a long time yet before the storm bursts, if indeed it reaches this part of the lake at all," says Longmore evasively.

He has been holding a not too auspicious weather talk with the Clarens boatmen, has received more warnings as to weather signals, streams and currents than his knowledge of *patois* Swiss-French enables him practically to grasp.

"In any case we may pull far enough out to see Chillon." The postscript is added in obedience to some mute command on Joyce's face. "Even if the badness of the weather sends us back at once."

"And if the lake is safe for a steamer, with thirty chartered sentimentalists on board, it ought to be safe for a rowing-boat with three," persists the girl, with admirable feminine casuistry. "Our portmanteaus are packed. Stradivarius is labeled 'Como.' If a catastrophe happens, we shall have the satisfaction of leaving our possessions in good order."

She steps lightly into the boat, then stretches back a hand to her mother's aid.

"I am suffering from vertigo; I can not measure distance," hesitates Mrs. Dormer, looking more and more uncomfortable. "Morally, I am not a coward, as you know, Joyce, but to-night some bodily weakness must have overtaken me. I doubt if I could keep myself upright in the boat."

"Then remain contentedly on dry land, mother. Mr. Longmore and I will row out far enough to see—or to be able to say we have seen—Chillon by moonlight, alone."

And fate, not unkindly, often, in smoothing difficulties for the imprudent, gives an impetus in the direction where impetus is least required. The boat's head touches the jetty, Joyce's hand is still outheld, when Mme. Scherer, *mère*, and a brace of grandchildren, issue from a house not twenty paces distant. What can be simpler than for Mrs. Dormer to return to the hotel under their escort, leaving Joyce and Longmore, when they have had their glimpse of moonlit Chillon, to follow?

"If you would give a serious promise to take care of yourselves." Promptly recovering from her vertigo, Mrs. Dormer skips landward joyfully. "I really think I shall put myself under Grandmamma Scherer's wing. The

babies walk slow—I dare say you will reach home before me. And Mr. Longmore, if he likes, can have some farewell music, while we pity the infatuated people exposed to the weather at Chillon. If you would give me a serious promise!”

“We give you a faithful promise,” cries Joyce, as Longmore, nothing loath, pushes the boat off from the jetty. “There shall be no thunder-storm on Lake Geneva to-night—if we can help it.”

“And we will return when we have seen Chillon,” says Hugh Longmore. “You know, of course, Miss Dormer,” he adds, when two or three strokes have put a deep iron-blue gulf between themselves and the shore, “that it will take an hour’s steady pulling before we come in sight of the castle? I feel it a matter of conscience to tell you.”

“Conscience! I know that we inhabit the best of all possible worlds,” answers Joyce Dormer, in her gayest voice. “I know that the lake is like crystal—pray admire these jeweler’s-shop similes—the sky like marble and sapphire. Let us enjoy ourselves while we can, Mr. Longmore. Conscience and thunder-storms will come upon us quickly enough, without our going one yard out of the way to meet them!”

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD BYRON’S ISLE.

FOR a time Miss Dormer’s spirits continue higher than their wont. She jests, sings, draws her hand, with the physical momentary enjoyment of a child, through the ice-cold lake water; by and by she suggests so gravely that Longmore for a moment is deceived by her voice, that they shall land and look after the thirty steamboat sentimentalists when they reach Chillon.

“There can be no doubt poor Farintyre needs looking after,” the lad answers, in the same tone. “I saw Miss Aurora Skelton pinning a flower in his button-hole as they left the hotel; I saw, also, that the pair lingered long in the rear of the rest. Farintyre is innocent of the world’s ways. He will be getting into an entanglement before he knows what he is about.”

“I do wish he would!” cries Joyce, clapping her wet

hands gleefully. "It would be a situation, and that is just what we all need. This wandering hotel life is a flat affair, absolutely deficient in dramatic points. But I am afraid one can not hope for anything so charming as that sensible John Farintyre should compromise himself. In the first place—time is too short. Mr. Farintyre leaves Clarens tomorrow. In the second—a man must have imagination to get into that kind of trouble. Now, if it were—don't be offended with me, Mr. Longmore—if it were you!"

"You think I am more wanting in common sense than Farintyre?"

As Longmore asks this question, he rests idly on his sculls, looking with a pleasure he does not seek to hide, at the girl's fair and sparkling face.

"I am afraid common sense is one of the subjects I am not at home in. The first evening I saw you on the terrace—how many days ago is that? What, can it be only five days since you taught me where to look for Arcturus on the mountains, yonder? That first evening I certainly thought you in danger. I credited you with an unsafe amount of imagination."

"That first evening—when I listened, not knowing your name, as you played Corelli's 'Nativity.' Afterward you gave me a lecture on old violins, do you recollect, Miss Dormer? We were interrupted just as you were beginning to tell me the story of your Stradivarius."

Miss Dormer's jeweler's-shop simile holds good still. The lake is like crystal, the sky like marble and sapphire. But it would seem that to Miss Dormer herself, this best of all possible worlds has of a sudden grown gray and overclouded. Youth, brightness, bloom, have died out from her face. Her lips have fallen into their most unsmiling expression. No sound is there for a minute's space, but the drip of Longmore's suspended sculls, and a vague inarticulate murmuring from the hither shore. Lake Lemán—the frail boat ever drifting further away among its currents—lies darkly, unnaturally motionless.

"Stradivarius came into my possession more than two years ago," with a visible effort Joyce Dormer at last begins. "It was a birthday present, given to me on the day I was eighteen. I have already told you, Mr. Longmore, that at that time we had a friend—who would have done his best, I think, to obtain the planet Mars, had I cried for it, such

a friend as people do not meet with twice in their life, let them be ever so lucky. Well, two or three weeks before my birthday, I was asked to choose a gift—one that should be costly, hard to come by, and that I would prize, irrespective of the giver, for its own sake. Diamonds and pearls and filigrees I would have none of. The worst people,” observes the girl, emphatically, “have some one virtue in their composition. I am not mercenary, in *little* things.”

“In *little* things!” repeats Longmore with a certain jar of feeling that he might find it hard to account for.

“In those days, at least, I was not mercenary. But I have lived a great deal since. I have had more than my share of experience. You must not run away with the idea that I am a simple kind of girl. I am a woman with a past. Well, I looked round the London shop-windows. I exercised my imagination; I appealed even to my mother. In vain: I was so rich in myself! The world, it seemed, held nothing that could add to my happiness.”

Joyce Dormer’s eyes are suffused, her face kindles with a passion of which, until to-night, young Longmore had not believed it capable.

This story of Stradivarius, told, with no audience save himself, and with the poetry of lake and mountain and coming storm as adjuncts, begins to affect him—vicariously, of course.

“At last I fell back on the dream of my whole life—a Cremona. After a fashion, I had played the violin from the time I was six years old. Here was something costly, with a vengeance, something hard to come by, and that I should dearly prize for its own sake. I made my choice, and on the morning of my eighteenth birthday the Stradivarius you know, bought in Vienna at I dare not say what price, was put into my hands.”

“Your friend must have been a rich man,” says Longmore, narrowly watching Miss Dormer’s pure and limpid face. “One hears of these Cremona violins selling for five or six hundred guineas.”

“If Stradivarius were worth a thousand guineas or a few shillings, it would be the same to me,” cries Joyce. “I shall never part from my violin while I live—perhaps because I am parted forever from the donor. Guineas! Why one would no more reckon up the price of one’s soul than

think of the market value of Stradivarius. 'Stained through and through,' as the 'Autocrat' says, 'with the concentrated tones and sweetness of all the harmonies which have kindled and faded on its strings.' "

Her speech is modulated by rich and sorrowful feeling. Bending her head low, she gazes intently down into the transparent water. "A woman with a past." The moods, then, the gravity, the weariness of this girl of twenty are rooted in experience of which she had had more than her share! And the boat drifts on—on, into deadliest peril, for Longmore, absorbed wholly in his companion and in the half-confidence she had made to him, rests inactive, still, upon his sculls.

Miss Dormer's voice recalls him with a start from speculation to reality.

"If nineteenth-century miracles were possible, I should say that a miracle was taking place now. You have not been rowing for the last ten minutes, Mr. Longmore, have you? Well, look behind; see the distance we have drifted. *What* is it that bears us away from the shore with such weird swiftness?"

It is the strong back current of the lake toward the Rhone valley—the current that has hurried so many victims to a blue and fathomless sleeping-place. In an instant young Longmore's hands grip tighter hold of the sculls; with very might he makes a few fruitless efforts at backing water, and then—the boatmen's warnings and the gravity of the situation bursts upon him.

If the weather remains calm, as it has been for days past, he knows the extent of the peril. Let the boat only float with the current as far as Villeneuve, and the worst will be over. A couple of hours' steady sculling close to shore will bring them back to Clarens. But the sky, during the past quarter of an hour has turned black; the moon shines cold and wan from behind the mass of cloud that threatens instantly to overwhelm her; a tremulous, uneasy motion of the boat tells that the storm is already agitating the western portion of the lake.

"Well," asks Joyce Dormer with tolerable self-command, "what is the meaning of it all? Do not be afraid to speak out. Why do we go at this extraordinary rate with no outward or visible means of locomotion? Why—"

A blaze of lightning irradiates mountain, villages, and

lake with fierce effulgence. The question dies on Joyce's lips. Ere she can recover her breath comes such thunder as only the meeting of mountain clouds engender, and mountain crags echo back. There is a lull, resembling in its sickening intensity some moments of keenest moral suspense—two or three seconds later the rain and wind in hurricanes are upon them! A rough tarpaulin has been left under a seat by one of the boatmen. This, with exceeding difficulty, Longmore draws around his companion's shoulders. And then facing each other still—for Joyce holds mechanically to the rudder, he to his sculls—they crouch and await their fate.

The storm has burst so suddenly that neither of them, perhaps, at first can grasp the full awfulness of their position. Five minutes ago they were gliding over a sea of glass, talking in soft whispers, transported into youth's fairy-land of romance, sweet in its very bitterness. And now—no, the prospect of danger and of death must be dwelt upon longer than *this* ere it can be realized!

“Poor little mother!” so Joyce exclaims at last with all the energy she can command. “Mr. Longmore, should you think the storm is as wild at Hotel Scherer as here?”

But Longmore answers not, hears her not. The voice of a cannon were, indeed, scarce distinguishable amidst the tumult of sound, the Babel of every angry element at once, that rages around them. Their boat, a broad-built little lake craft, holds her own stoutly, but each surmounted wave, Hugh Longmore too truly knows, may be the last. Accident, a succession of accidents, has alone kept them up to this, from shipwreck. And the storm has not reached its height, the lake has not risen to its full fury. Estimating roughly the length of time that has passed since they left Clarens, he judges that they must be about midway between the shores, cut off from all possibility of help. A life-boat exists at Vevey, manned by a stalwart crew and a brave one. But Vevey is miles away. Mortal heart knows not of their danger, and unless rescue come in the next quarter of an hour, they perish!

With the condensed retrospective memory of a man dying by violent death, young Longmore goes back over his twenty-two years of life. A thousand little incidents make his Winchester school-days, his Oxford terms, appear before him in a flash. He looks forward to that final exami-

nation in jurisprudence (honors) which he will certainly *not* pass. He knows a brief, exceeding bitter pang, remembering the country parsonage that a short paragraph in the "Times" may render desolate. And then—he thinks only of his companion, the girl whom, after a week's acquaintance, he has come so near to loving, and to whom death, not life, shall unite him!

He bends forward, and during a moment's break in the tempest, speaks so that Miss Dormer can hear. Is she very cold: very wet? Is there anything he can do for her?

In real life, even at its supremest moments, men's speech is so much tamer than their feelings, so seldom rises from the monosyllables of Saxon commonplace to the dignified periods of the drama!

"Do for me?" echoes Joyce, and, keenly listening for her reply, Longmore detects a sound like laughter beneath the tarpaulin. "Well, yes. Keep me from drowning, if you can." Then, almost in the same breath, "Look! there is the shore; there are trees just ahead of us," she cries, in a voice wild and broken with excitement. "There!—in that last flash of lightning I saw the outlines plainly. Great Heaven! We are close upon it. We are lost!"

The boat, as she speaks, eddies round as a leaf might eddy in a whirlwind, under the influence of some new opposing force, then, with one wild shock, is flung broadside upon *terra firma*. For a few seconds Joyce Dormer loses consciousness—such, at least, in attempting to picture the scene afterward, is the outcome of her confused recollection. With the dawn of returning sensation, she realizes that she is on dry land; stunned, giddy, surrounded still by the spray of surging waves, but with a pair of strong arms holding her tight, with solid ground, not a frail and swaying plank, beneath her feet.

"Where am I?" she utters faintly. "Are we on shore? Have we got safely back to Clarens?"

"We are on shore," Longmore answers; "but, I am afraid, far enough away from Clarens! The boat ran aground for a few seconds," he adds, still holding her closely to his side, "and by some desperate turn of luck we struggled, both of us, through the surf."

"And we shall return to my mother the moment the storm lessens? Listen! The thunder is growing more distant, is it not? In another few minutes we will start—on

foot, of course. We will not trust ourselves to the tender mercies of the lake again to-night."

No reply is needed from Longmore. At this instant a flash of lightning, longer, more lurid than any of the preceding ones, gives the vividly significant answer of facts to Joyce's question.

The scene of their shipwreck is the little isle of Byron's prisoner, a small patch of lake-girt land immediately opposite the embouchure of the Rhone; the little isle whose "three tall trees" are groaning, as if in agony, under the storm, and across whose narrow confines the surf and spray are dashing with dangerous strength.

Blacker than ever has grown the moonless sky, fiercer the wind. No friendly light from village or beacon-tower is to be descried along the dimly visible shore.

"I call this charming!" exclaims Joyce, when two or three breathless minutes have gone by. "All my life I have been longing for one good, solid, genuine adventure. I have got my desire at last. So this is shipwreck." Her teeth chatter with cold as she speaks. "Have not one's clothes a queer, heavy, Ancient Mariner sensation about them? We must be nearly wet through."

Nearly! They are as honestly drenched as though they had been to the bottom of the lake. In the struggle of making good their landing, the supreme struggle in which Longmore had to fight for two lives at once, the boatman's tarpaulin was carried, with the boat, away. Not an inch, not the possibility of an inch of shelter, is between them and the skies.

"If one had to brave it for half an hour, it would be nothing," says the lad miserably. "But we may have to pass hours here before we can be picked up. Miss Dormer, what have I led you into? How will you ever be able to pull through such a night as this?"

"Don't make the worst of things, Mr. Longmore," is Joyce's prompt answer. "One feels chillier than is comfortable perhaps, and heavy. I can hardly bear my own weight. Otherwise there is not much to complain of. The life-boat people at Vevey will hear from Monsieur Scherer that we are abroad. There is no fear as to our being found eventually."

"If I could only shield you from the rain, meanwhile!"

He stands between her and the storm; he takes off his

jacket, fortunately of thick pilot cloth, and buttons it round her shoulders; then strives to bring life into her death-cold hands by chafing them between his own.

And the fury of the night waxes fiercer, the lightning becomes incessant. A stifling sulphurous smell is in the air.

Of himself, stout English lad that he is, young Longmore thinks nothing; but Joyce—will the delicately nurtured, fragile girl ever live through the hours between this and dawn? He stoops, afraid lest she be losing consciousness, and whispers—the first futile question that comes to his lips: “What is she thinking of?”

“I was thinking,” says Joyce in her quiet, cadenced voice, “how opportune it was of Lord Byron to invent this island. But for the poet, Mr. Longmore, where would you and I be now?”

“And you are not extremely wretched, not in actual suffering?” persists Longmore. “I feel so horribly guilty of all this! If you would only say”—in spite of himself, a foolish, half-tender shyness infuses itself into his voice—“that you forgive me!”

“I have to thank you for the two best things I have got out of Switzerland,” says Joyce. “First—incline your ear a little closer—first, for our moonlight dingle, where the wild thyme grew, and now for our magnificent shipwreck. This is the very stuff inspiration is made of!” A crash of louder thunder rives the air as she speaks, followed, after a second’s pause, by lightning forked and sheet, intermingled in one wild blaze. “This makes one appreciate Wagner’s Donner und Blitzen music, does it not—makes one think of Weber’s great overture more respectfully? Listen to the moaning of the lake! Hear how the ‘three trees’ wail, as though they were sorry for our plight. Oh, this is grand! One knows now how Beethoven came to write the Prisoners’ Chorus in ‘Fidelio.’”

And in the intense electric whiteness of the moment, Longmore sees her face distinctly. The sensitive, mobile features are aglow with feeling; warmth has returned to her cheeks; a fire of sweet, perfectly natural enthusiasm is in her blue eyes. At this moment Joyce Dormer is an artist, filled with an artist’s self-forgetfulness. She remembers neither her present companion, nor her absent suitor, no, nor the ever-present sense of lost happiness which, walking with her, hand in hand, is the shadow of her young

life! Beethoven's giant outcry, that chorus in "Fidelio" into which the sufferings of our whole race seem crushed—she can hear the like of this in winds and waves and thunder; can feel, girl though she be, that an hour may come when she, in her weakness, shall, like the master in his strength, give adequate utterance to the pent-up emotion of years, and that the world shall say: This is Art!

But Hugh Longmore misjudges her.

Hugh Longmore, it may be urged in his justification, is twenty-two years of age, unversed in the world's ways, ignorant of the sharp, thin line that divides friendship from sentiment, and both from love. He sees the warming cheek, the parted lips, the blue eyes sweetly fired! A wild, a desperate hope seizes his heart, and he whispers words that to this hour burn him with humiliation, even in the retrospect.

"I can not hear a syllable," cries Joyce. Did ever man receive so sincere, so unconscious a rebuff! "Please let me answer when I have got my wits more about me." Of a truth, she is in a land far distant from this outward and visible one, is listening to messages too subtle even for lovers' language—messages that in her excited brain are forming themselves into wild, unearthly music. "Don't think me uncivil, Mr. Longmore—for the first time in my life I feel original—I have got hold of a *motif*! Oh, if we had only put a pencil and a sheet of scored paper in our pockets!"

CHAPTER IX.

JOHN FARINTYRE RISES TO DIGNITY.

WHEN youth lingers abnormally long on the face of man or woman, you may theorize, pretty surely, as to the relative amount of feeling that accompanies it. Are not love and love's anxieties the tools that carve out hollows around too fond eyes, and delve unseemly parallels on cheeks and foreheads?

Little Mrs. Dormer at nine-and-thirty looks a girl. Without malice, it may be said that little Mrs. Dormer never makes more of trouble than is picturesquely needful, never, under any conditions, goes forth to meet the thing that is unpleasant on the road.

During her daughter's childish ailments—and twice or thrice Joyce's small feet came near to entering the dark portals—Mrs. Dormer was ever ready, with or without a change of symptom, to accept such optimist hopes as doctors and nurses held forth to her. During the bitter love-sorrow of the girl's maturer years, Mrs. Dormer felt it a moral obligation to go to dinners and dances and operas (“keep our places, in this all-forgetting London, open,” she used to say, with a moistened eyelash), until such time as Joyce's stricken heart should win its way back to health.

She does not forsake her standard of duty to-night. Regrettable doubtless, for convention's sake, that one of these mountain storms should burst at the time when Joyce, unchaperoned, had rowed a few hundred yards forth on the lake to see Chillon. But there is no cause whatever for grave anxiety—so M. Scherer, smooth smiles around his Swiss lips, and dire forebodings in his Swiss soul, assures her. The dread is, that Joyce may be delayed longer than John Farintyre, with whom it were unwise just now to risk serious misunderstanding, might think proper. Social rupture, however trivial or serious, was never mended by brooding over it beforehand. If reconciliation be needed when these hot-headed young people return, Mrs. Dormer, you may be sure, will come to the fore, with all the tact that knowledge of their weakness and of her own strength can engender. And in the meantime—

In the meantime, she draws the curtains of her salon, lights her reading-lamp, arranges lamp and books cozily on a low table beside the sofa, and settles down to the latest positivist philosophy as set forth in the current number of the “Bi-monthly!”

So things go on, rose-colored theories still tenable, for half an hour or more. Then the storm, that hitherto has swept obliquely over Clarens, circles back round the eastern head of the lake, after the manner of Lake Lemman storms, with the strength of a cyclone. The lightnings blaze until reading-lamps seem useless and positive philosophy dark; thunder rolls; winds roar; slates fly. There comes a crash, a fall, and then a hurried cry that one of the hotel out-buildings has fallen. Finally, at the very zenith of confusion—waiters rushing this way and that, servant-women wringing their hands, small children and Swiss grand-mammas screaming on upstairs floors—in walk the storm-

beaten sentimentalists, John Farintyre at their head, from Chillon. But no Hugh Longmore—waiting, by this time with a quickened pulse, on the stairs, Mrs. Dormer is forced to swallow the unwelcome truth—no Hugh Longmore; no Joyce.

Mrs. Scipio Leonidas is in loud hysterics (a waxen-faced Shelley-like partner lost somewhere on the road). Her do the hall-porter's strong arms bear, *nolens volens*, off the scene. The Skelton family is in worse plight still. The Skelton family, to use a phrase common in haberdashery, "does not wash." The veteran's penciled eyebrows have dissolved, gone from her lips is the summer bloom, the warranted smile gleams corpse-like. And her daughters? Ah! if the great Thoreau could see them! Her daughters' complexions are in a putty, their spirits at zero, their voices hollow. Has not Joyce Dormer's suitor been grim, absent, unsmiling, the one moral element needed to crown the general fiasco! Limp, draggled, discomfited, these ladies take refuge, with what speed they may, in the sanctuary of their own apartments, and upon Mr. John Farintyre devolves the telling of the tale.

Scarcely had the excursion steamer started, before the captain, tardily weather-wise, declared his intention of getting on to Villeneuve for the night. The party from Hotel Scherer were put ashore at Chillon, with injunctions to return, as the nature of their tickets permitted them to do, by rail. But the last train to Lausanne had already passed ere they reached the station. Not a vehicle, in face of the coming storm, was to be hired. And the sentimentalists, unless they would spend the night at Chillon, had no choice but to make their way back through rain and tempest on foot, arriving in such sorry condition as we have seen.

"In short, you who stayed behind have had the best of it," concludes Farintyre, turning morosely on Mrs. Dormer, who has met him at the entrance of the hall. "I can fancy how you and Miss Dormer, and *that young Longmore*, have been making merry at our expense."

"I—I am looking for Joyce's return at every minute." Mrs. Dormer falters this, turning very white. "I had hoped to see Joyce come back with the rest, but—"

Further explanation is cut short by M. Scherer, who comes up suavely, rubbing his hands, the professional

Swiss smile round his mouth, and with a new source of hopeful consolation to offer to Mrs. Dormer.

M. Scherer has this moment received a telegram from Vevey. Sympathizing in the parental anxiety of madame, he dispatched a messenger thither more than an hour since, and learns that the life-boat put forth at the first threatenings of storm. On such a night as this the life-boat's crew will row straight away toward the embouchure of the Rhone, picking up, we may feel certain, whatever unwary strangers shall unfortunately be still upon the lake. Madame need be under no fear with the Vevey life-boat afloat (but M. Scherer has children of his own; his thin lips falter as he speaks). With the life-boat afloat there is not the smallest little doubt in the world about the safety of *cette chère mademoiselle* and of the young English gentleman who accompanied her.

"A life-boat certainly does give one a sense of security," observes Mrs. Dormer, raising her soft eyes, floating in tears, to John Farintyre. "Life-boats are manned by such magnificent fellows always, are they not? And—and—"

She breaks off short, scared by a certain fixed look upon her prospective son-in-law's face.

"Mr. Hugh Longmore, I assume, is the young English gentleman?" For once in his life, John Farintyre almost rises to dignity. "*Cette chère mademoiselle* is not spending the night abroad without a companion?"

And Mrs. Dormer knows that her position is a critical one.

She is not cruelly perturbed about Joyce's exposure to the storm, as a weaker or a stronger woman might well be. Why torture one's self with vain nervousness, when a landlord who understands the country, the climate, and the Vevey life-boat, gives a positive assurance that everything will come right in the end?

But she is shaken to the inmost fiber of her being by this fixed expression, this index of resolution already formed, that she can decipher on Farintyre's face.

"I—am not strong enough for such anxiety. Joyce—my child—come back to me—"

Thus cries Mrs. Dormer, moved by an inspiration of that genius which is the most graceful substitute society offers for real feeling. Then, stretching forth a pair of white,

appealing hands, she faints away, with the loveliest decorum—with Monsieur, Madame, and Grandmère Scherer looking on, respectfully sympathetic—into John Farintyre's arms.

CHAPTER X.

ETHER.

AND so, when Joyce and Longmore do at length return, when—drenched hero and heroine of the hour—they have gone through an ovation from hosts, hall-porters, servants, guests, and find themselves outside the door of Mrs. Dormer's salon, it comes to pass that the fumes of ether greet them.

And Joyce's heart turns cold!

At many an important turning-point in her young life's journey, ether has been made to play a leading and successful part. Once, notably, on a breezy day, when her father—lawyers present—decided in black and white what settlement he should annually make upon the wife from whom the exigencies of bronchitis and *bric-à-brac* divided him; once again, years later, when the cruel letter was composed and dispatched that broke forever with Roger Tryan. With forebodings, all the keener, probably, by reason of her overwrought bodily state, the girl's heart informs her that ether will be successful now.

"It is best for us to say good-night, Mr. Longmore." Pausing at the half-opened door, she gives the young Oxonian her frozen hand. "But for you I should be at the bottom of the lake. Well, if by to-morrow morning I find the taste of living sweet again, I shall be able to thank you more heartily. Now, I must think only of my mother."

She walks into the salon, feverish, poor child, from exhaustion, her clothes dripping, her hair disordered, her blue eyes wild and pale, to find—this picture:

A reading-lamp, becomingly softened by a porcelain shade; the current number of the "*Bi-monthly*," turned face-downward on a table; a white shawl; cushions; a pretty dimpled hand holding a morsel of cambric to a morsel of a nose and—ether! To these details, Mr. John Farintyre, pacing up and down the room with much the gait

and amiability of a caged bear, forms an effective background.

A feeble: "Well, Joyce!" in the tone the girl knows too well, proceeds from Mrs. Dormer; and, in a moment, Joyce, on her knees, is at her mother's side.

"Mamma, poor dear mamma." She covers Mrs. Dormer's warm little hand with repentant kisses. "I am more sorry than I can say to have caused you such anxiety. Oh, mother, you must indeed have gone through a terrible time."

Mrs. Dormer, it would seem, does not notice her daughter's pallor, the weariness of her eye, the cold and stiffened condition of her drenched garments. Mrs. Dormer lays a hand on the approximate region of her own heart. In an almost inaudible voice, she murmurs a word or two about "palpitations." She gives a glance at the dark, bear-like figure of John Farintyre.

"Another escapade like this will be the death of me. You know, Joyce, every one knows, how feeble the action of my heart is; how all the doctors have bidden me avoid strong emotion as I would avoid poison."

Never surely was patient more obedient to physician's orders!

"Escapade—is this my welcome?" cries Joyce, and shrinking away, she rises instantly to her feet. Alas! the moment's keen disappointment is no new experience for her. Since she was four years old, it has been a familiar one whenever she has most lavished generous love or generous confidence on Mrs. Dormer. "I started with Mr. Longmore, as you know, mamma, almost by your own proposal, to get a moonlight view of Chillon. The storm came on too suddenly for us to return to shore, and but for Mr. Longmore's skill and courage, we must have been lost. An escapade! You do not think I have stayed out on such a night, in such a condition as this," extending an arm from which the water literally streams, "for pleasure?"

"And where, may I ask Miss Dormer, were you and the courageous Longmore lucky enough to find shelter?" exclaims Farintyre, brusquely pausing in his walk. "No business of mine to inquire, you will say, perhaps. I think it is my business, for another half hour at all events, to inquire into everything that concerns Miss Joyce Dormer's good name."

For a second or two Joyce looks at him as though the meaning of his speech failed to reach her. Then she turns indignantly away. Crimson flows the blood over her warm, sunken cheeks.

“Mother, am I forced to listen to such a reproach as this? I went out on the lake by your approval, and in excellent charge. Our boat drifted into one of the back currents of the Rhone before we knew our danger, and then the storm burst, suddenly, and but for a miracle we must have been lost—”

“A miracle, or Mr. Hugh Longmore?” Farintyre interposes the question, not too graciously.

“You know Lord Byron’s Island, opposite Villeneuve, mamma? On that tiny speck of ground, thanks to Mr. Longmore’s gallant courage, we made good our landing. There we remained, our boat gone, without shelter, numbed, drenched, until those fine life-boat men—yes,” with a look of fierce disgust at John Farintyre, with an involuntary clinching of her cold hand, “*men* as gentle as they were brave, saved us—straight, it seems to me now, out of the jaws of death. And then, coming home to you, mother, rescued, one hears such paltry talk as this of ‘good name!’ Oh, if you loved me, sir,” and she turns again toward Farintyre, a glow of eloquent anger on her young face, “if you loved me—and I know what I say, I know what love is—you would be so glad to see me safe, there would be no room in your mind for paltrier feelings.”

A lover standing on Joyce Dormer’s level, mentally, would, I think, make answer by taking her, faults and all, to his heart. For he would understand her. John Farintyre—no exceptionally black Othello, but commonplace, through and through—John Farintyre feels himself at once injured and unmoved.

“Tall talk is above my head. Never was good at acting—private theatricals and charades, and—and that sort of thing. And you *are*. Oh, it’s no good smoothing matters over, Mrs. Dormer.” For here poor Mrs. Dormer struggles to edge in a conciliatory word. “I can’t hold a candle to Miss Dormer in the way of cleverness, leave that to more fortunate men than myself! But I have my notions of what is, and what is not the correct thing for a girl to do. And I believe I have the honor of looking forward, some day, to becoming Miss Dormer’s husband. And, by

George!" he goes on, gradually lashing himself to fury with his own powers of invective, "I'll stand no more of this sort of work, engaged or married. You can break the whole thing off, or not, just as you choose. But if you keep to me at all, you shall obey me. You hear, obey!"

And with a couple of strides, Mr. Farintyre has crossed the room; the murderous, crushing grasp of his heavy fingers encircles Joyce's wrist.

And now, if never in her life before, does Mrs. Dormer practically show how great a rôle ether can be made to fill in the drama of human lives.

Contempt, disgust, righteous indignation are struggling for mastery on Joyce's face; mistrust, that it needs but a breath to kindle into open revolt, is on the face of John Farintyre. Another half minute and words beyond all recall would probably part these two ill-suited people forever, did not little Mrs. Dormer rise mistress of the situation.

"My heart!" she moans, stretching out her hand to the ether bottle, which in her agitation, or her agony, she oversets. "I—I feel this painful excitement is too much for me. Mr. Farintyre—pardon—"

And then, for the second time on this miserably fateful evening, she loses consciousness.

One does not care to dwell overmuch on the scene that follows. It is long ere Mrs. Dormer recovers from her state of fainting—I feel in doubt as to the fittest spelling of this word! When, at length, she speaks again, Joyce, partly influenced by the fumes of ether, partly by sheer bodily weariness, has reached a helpless shivering condition in which she would probably answer "yes," were the suggestion made of leading her to instant execution.

"The mischief arose from want of thought. My darling girl has caused me this wretchedness unintentionally," murmurs Mrs. Dormer, taking up the thread of her ideas with singular clearness for one newly returned out of the dark know-nothing world of syncope. "And you, dear Mr. Farintyre, will forgive, will you not, as all of us must hope to be forgiven?"

"If Joyce chooses to shake hands over it all, things may go on smoother for the future than they have ever done." Farintyre's tone is that of a man who recognizes the generosity of his own conduct. "I don't think I stipulate for anything extraordinary," he adds, with a tentative side

glance at Joyce's face. "Let the engagement be called an engagement. Let a fellow know what ground he stands upon—feel a little sure—"

"You hear, Joyce," interrupts the fainting woman, raising herself briskly, and fixing a pair of expressive eyes on her daughter's face. "Mr. Farintyre asks only for the security to which he is entitled. Make me happy, child, after all I have been called upon to suffer this night. Give him your hand."

Joyce Dormer stands mute, irresolute, sick at heart.

"If the thing is to be, I suppose one may as well cry Kismet!" so, at last, she answers, with a kind of forced spirits, with pale and quivering lips. "But I can not admit, mamma, of that word security. There shall be a loop-hole left. The engagement, as Mr. Farintyre wishes it, can be called an engagement—that is all. If either of us see fit to change between this and Easter it shall not be counted as falsehood. We are free, still."

John Farintyre, it would seem, is satisfied. He takes possession of Joyce's hand—she has not the strength, physical or moral, to withdraw it! Then, emboldened by this negative consent, he draws her to him, and officially, here in her mother's presence, touches her cheek with his lips.

Joyce Dormer feels that she will never get over the shame of that first, bartered, loveless kiss while she lives.

CHAPTER XI.

CATS AND RED CLOVER.

BUT human souls, alas! the pity of it, do, perforce, get over everything. Our troubles kill themselves if they fail of killing us; and the registrar-general does not even make a return respecting the number of men and women who, in this nineteenth century, die in England from moral causes. With the definite prospect before her of becoming John Farintyre's wife next Easter, Joyce Dormer must rise, go to rest, eat her meals, adjust a becoming fold, a soft-tinted knot of ribbon before her looking-glass, just as in the happy days when she had promised herself, with all her faults, and all her virtues, to the man she passionately loved.

During two short days—days, who shall say of what secret, what wild rebellion—she keeps her room.

“My dear Joyce is sleeping off the effects of storm and shipwreck,” her mother whispers, toward the close of Saturday, to Hugh Longmore. Mrs. Dormer has had the thoughtfulness to send for the young Oxonian—just to give him a hand-pressure, to bless him, dewy thankfulness in her soft, gray eyes, for his *noble, heroic* conduct of the previous night. “I am not a friend in general to crystallized hell.” Mrs. Dormer slides with grace over the monosyllable. “After such a fright, such a wetting, however, one felt that four-and-twenty hours’ sleep would be priceless, and Joyce was persuaded to take a small half-teaspoonful of Hunter’s syrup. We have put off our departure until Monday morning,” adds Mrs. Dormer cheerfully, “so my daughter will have ample time to say all the pretty things the situation requires, with her own lips, to Mr. Longmore.”

And, early on the morning of Monday, Longmore receives a little three-cornered, pencil-written note—it seems to his imagination with some faint odor of wild thyme clinging around its folds—from Miss Dormer.

He has, I need scarcely say, indulged in pretty frequent speculations on a certain interesting “problem” during the fifty-six hours since the shipwreck; the net result of such speculations being that he, Hugh Longmore, has tumbled, headlong and hopelessly, into love. Wisdom recommends an *alibi*: “Get clear of Clarens,” says the monitress; “flee from the blue eyes that have so effectually put common sense and peace of mind to flight.” And he has already determined to be wise, has looked up hours of departure in the train-bills, has commenced a rough and desultory packing of his Gladstone, when that three-cornered note, with its imaginary odor of wild thyme, is handed to him.

“DEAR MR. LONGMORE,—We are to leave for Italy this evening. Mamma and I hope you will drink five-o’clock tea with us for the last time. If you would like some music, come round to our salon in the afternoon. Would three be too early?

“JOYCE.”

It is a fine occasion for a man to display the philosophy that is in him.

Wisdom, looking back upon Lord Byron's Isle, and upon words uttered there in a moment of madness, recommends an *alibi*.

Joyce Dormer invites to five-o'clock tea.

Young Hugh Longmore unpacks his boots and hair-brushes, and exactly as the Clarens clocks strike three, walks along the corridor—his heart most unphilosophically beating—that leads to Mrs. Dormer's salon.

He finds Joyce alone at the piano, a complicated score before her, which she is very evidently not studying. Her face looks pale and aged. As she rises, on Longmore's entrance, her eyes meet his somewhat less frankly than their wont.

"You deserve all sorts of pretty speeches, Mr. Longmore." So she remarks, after the first stereotyped anxieties have been uttered and set at rest. "Some day, if I find that being alive is really sweet again, I will make them to you in a letter. My mother declares that if she had been rescued from destruction, she would write a whole book of sonnets and dedicate it to her preserver. But poor mamma thinks life so enjoyable! She credits all us worn-out people of a younger generation with having the same relish for it as herself. You have come early for some music, have you not?"

Longmore has come early—that he may be as long as possible in Joyce Dormer's society. Sensible to this fact he gives his answer without hesitation. Yes. He has come early—for music.

"You said once you would like to hear some of my poor compositions." Crossing to a table, Joyce takes out her Stradivarius from its case. "As mamma is still busy, packing, I will play you two little songs for the violin that I wrote long ago. The first is called 'In the Campagna.' You must suppose it to be a morning of Roman spring." Her face begins to color as she softly coaxes her instrument into tune. "The asphodel bloom is white, the myrtle in fresh foliage, the air full of violets. And a pair of foolish human beings are thinking, with beating hearts, that all the rest of life will be as happy as to-day. You understand?"

"Too well, I am afraid, Miss Dormer."

Philosophic though he be, Hugh Longmore's answer is given with a marked strain of tenderness in its tone.

"I don't know what music can really represent sunshine, and violets, and foolish human dreams, as some fanatics of the Schumann school declare; anyhow, you know how I wish my poor little attempt to be interpreted. I am like little Mark Twain's artist," adds the girl; her heaviness, it seems to Longmore, attempting to find relief in raillery. "It is useless to disguise the fact from you any longer," he tells the showman. "These rocks in the foreground *air* horses.' Well, these sounds I am going to draw from my violin strings *air* asphodel blooms, blue-sky, and marble ruins—with a pair of exceedingly foolish young people dreaming in their midst. Wait a second or two, until I have resined my bow, and you shall hear."

"In the Campagna" is one of those simple songs without words, to which every kindred listener can supply the text in his own soul; a song of such human happiness as is born of young blood and warm skies, flowing without effort, to pure and ringing harmony. As Longmore listens, as he watches the sweet, unstudied attitude, the hands, the lips of the girlish composer, he bethinks him, with a pang of what, after a seven days' dream, the years are likely to be, without Joyce Dormer! How shall he, once having drunk of this divinest madness, turn back to common existence, common law? How take interest in Blackstone and Markby, in the litigations over wills or marriage settlements of Brown, Jones and Robinson, while the one woman who could have turned life's flat prose to poetry, walks apart from him upon the face of the earth; likelier than not, as the wife of Mr. John Farintyre?

"It is full of faults, as a composition," cries Joyce, when he has stumbled, with British awkwardness, through a few stiff praises. "My life has not been ruled by my own ambitions, or I should have gone, when I was fifteen, to the Leipsic conservatorium to make music my study. As it is, I shall only be an amateur with a pretty taste, and tolerably dexterous fingers, to the last."

"If the world contained a few more such amateurs, Miss Dormer!"

"Mr. Longmore, you are trying to be complimentary. As a punishment, I shall play you my second song. I called the first 'In the Campagna,' thinking of Browning's

‘Love among the Ruins.’ I call this, ‘When Summer Dies,’ from Keats’s line in ‘Endymion.’ Our pair of foolish lovers, you must imagine, are beginning to discern that April time and wind-blown asphodels and violet scents do not last forever.” And speaking thus she plays again—a cantata with a wider sweep of meaning than the first, with a subtle wail of pain underlying the surface of joyousness of the centric melody.

Hugh Longmore asks himself, with an absurdly keen twinge of jealousy, if experience so rich in passion can have been drawn actually from the girl’s own life? Is the song inspired by a woman’s remembrance or by an artist’s prophecy?

Joyce Dormer seems to guess his thoughts.

“My compositions have the trick of emotion about them, have they not?” As she makes this somewhat cynical remark she lays down her Stradivarius, fondly, gently, as though some invisible, vanished hand received it from her own. “But I am afraid the trick is artificial, a thing one has learned, together with one’s fugue and counterpoint, at so much an hour, from some German music-master. Shall I do better, I wonder, in the future? As we shivered under Lord Byron’s three tall trees the other night, I told you that I had found a *motif*. It has seemed to me since that a picture of absolute loss and ruin, the shipwreck of two foolish lives that set out amidst April sunshine and violet scents, would fitly end my trio of songs—”

“The falsest art in the world, my dear! Never end anything with a shock!” Mrs. Dormer, who has quietly entered, offers this advice.

“An episode in minor occurs in most lives. Music should render it as an episode only. Shipwreck, absolute loss, whatever girls and boys may think at twenty, are of their nature, inartistic. As much thunder and lightning as you choose early in your work. Leave your hearers when you finish in a state of calm repose. People who commit irretrievable fiascos are only in their place on the boards of a transpontine theater. Mr. Longmore, how do you do? Quite sad to think how soon we must say good-bye! And you would like—Joyce, darling, where is your violin—Mr. Longmore, no doubt, would like to hear you play for the last time in Hotel Scherer.”

They play to him for nearly an hour bright and airy music, selected, doubtless, by Mrs. Dormer on artistic principle, the principle of making final impressions cheerful ones. But Joyce's heart is not in her fingers this afternoon. It would seem that her eyes read other notes than those written on the score. The performance is spiritless. At five o'clock a waiter enters with tea, and Mrs. Dormer shuts the piano a little abruptly.

"We never played so badly in our lives. I forbid Mr. Longmore to applaud. Where are your thoughts, my dear Joyce? In our half-packed portmanteaus or—"

"My thoughts are with the people who commit irretrievable fiascos," answers Joyce. "I was thinking neither of Gounod nor Berlioz, but of the episode in a minor key that has yet to be written; that episode which shall have for its title 'Shipwreck.'"

Mrs. Dormer seats herself at the tea-table and begins talking about nothing with a persistent vivacity that disperses sentiment by force. Sad to leave this fresh, blue Switzerland behind, yet charming—if friends could only accompany one—to think that another twenty-four hours will see them in the land of Fata Morgana—on the south side of the Alps. People go on existing in all the other countries of Europe. In Italy *one lives!*

It is the kind of commonplace that carries with it a superficial ring of sincerity. But it is only a commonplace. Who should know better than Mrs. Dormer that a pretty, agreeable little woman may "go on existing," quite as enjoyably in London or Paris as elsewhere?

"And you, Mr. Longmore, is there no remote chance of our seeing you in the South? We shall spend the remainder of the autumn at the Italian lakes; during winter we shall be in Nice. Those tyrannical doctors insist upon my breathing the air of the French Riviera until spring breaks." (And the gayeties of the Nice season decline!) "Easter will find us, as it finds most other vagabond English people, in Rome. Joyce, my love," and Mrs. Dormer says this with intentional meaning, "we should be very pleased, should we not, if Mr. Longmore chanced to be in Rome next Easter?"

Joyce is standing beside the window, her violin still between her hands, her whole attitude one of nerveless dejection. At the mention of her own name she starts round;

then busies herself in packing away her Stradivarius in its case.

"I—I was speaking of Italy," Mrs. Dormer repeats, discreetly leaving the question of next Easter alone. "And do you know, my child, if we mean to start upon our journey to-night we have not very much time to lose. Madame Scherer says we ought to leave this house punctually at seven. What can John Farintyre be about?"

"John Farintyre is on the terrace, mother," cries Joyce with an air of mock alarm, "and I don't like the look of things. I hope nothing is about to happen to any of us, but these uncanny manifestations frighten me." Longmore can not but think that the girl when she speaks thus is putting a force upon herself. The effort, if it be one, is, however, successful. To any but a solver of problems, the artificial tone of banter might pass for flow of spirits. "John Farintyre has got a book in his hands. And that book is neither a yellow-back novel nor a 'Cavendish.'"

"Mr. Farintyre has a strong natural taste for reading," observes Mrs. Dormer suavely. "A taste rather undeveloped perhaps at present, but quite certain to show itself in the future. I lent him a volume of Darwin this morning, and he is simply wrapped up—lost in it! I am convinced John Farintyre would take the keenest interest in works of scientific research if he only allowed himself more time for study."

And when young Croesus comes sauntering in, some minutes later, book in hand, with countenance more hopelessly void of mind than usual, she, forthwith, begins to chatter Darwinism and Huxleyiana for his benefit.

Full of tact, of cleverness, up to a certain level, there is one matter in which Mrs. Dormer is prone to err. She overrates the power possessed by Mrs. Dormer of molding men to her wishes.

The great barrier, she honestly believes, between Joyce and Farintyre is an intellectual one. Then John Farintyre's intellect must be cultivated. What, on the surface, can be easier? Make him skim over some nice popular little text-books of science, imbue him with the last subversive ideas in history, put a volume or two of erotic, mystic verse into his hands, and spice the whole with some well-translated German rationalism. To this, in due course, must be added the proper amount of feminine

coaching; the coaching that teaches you how to find staple for conversation out of the slightest materials; to recognize the subjects on which you may safely assume the responsibility of an opinion; above all, to know when to be silent.

If Mrs. Dormer could inspire an ignorant man with *that* knowledge, she would have cause to be proud, indeed, of her own powers!

"The chapter I marked for you is deliciously suggestive, is it not? Mr. Longmore, I am sure, will remember it—the chapter in which Darwin gives instances of plants and animals, remote in the scale of nature, who are yet bound together by a web of complex relations?"

"I am afraid the subject is out of my depth," says Hugh Longmore, with the repugnance sensible men feel to scientific prattle at the tea-table.

"It may be deep for you," cries Farintyre aggressively. "To me the whole thing seems as plain as a pike-staff if once you accept Darwin's facts. Of course," he goes on, with the solemn complacency of dullness, "one must start from some kind of premises, take something for granted. I do accept Darwin's premises. I believe in primitive germs. I am an out-and-out—what the deuce is the term? An out-and-out—"

"Evolutionist, perhaps."

As Joyce makes the suggestion, she bends her head down over her plate, and Longmore notices that her color deepens.

She is beginning, already, to blush for Mr. John Farintyre.

"Now, there's the cats and the red clover. You couldn't have a better proof of interdependence than that. Ordinary people, you know, Longmore, would not see any connection between the two. But the man of science can tell you better. There could never be much red clover about in a district where there were no cats."

"Indeed! How does the man of science make that out?" Hugh Longmore asks innocently, "I am one of the ordinary people, are not you, Miss Dormer?"

"An ordinary person, waiting for enlightenment," says Joyce, looking pained. "Mother, suppose you tell us more about these wonderful cats."

But Mr. John Farintyre does not mean to have his story taken from him.

“The fact is, don’t you know, it’s all because of the humble-bees. Clover won’t fertilize in any quantity in a district without humble-bees.”

And Mr. John Farintyre helps himself, with an air of conviction, to bread and butter.

“Really? As you come fresh from the fountain-head, we must accept the facts,” remarks Longmore. “But we have a right to ask that facts shall be explained. You can never have red clover in a district where there are no cats, because humble-bees are necessary for its fertilization! I am more out of my depth than ever.”

“I—I’m quite positive I’m right,” says Farintyre, growing hot and confused. “Where’s the good of turning everything into an argument? The humble-bees determine the quantity of the red clover, and the cats—deuce take it, man! You can’t expect me to have it all, chapter and verse—the cats of course, determine the quantity of the humble-bees.”

“Don’t you think we have omitted one important factor—the field-mice?” ask little Mrs. Dormer.

Longmore looks across at Joyce. Her eyes are downcast, her delicate face is suffused from brow to chin. And he knows, as plainly as though the communication had been made to him in words, that John Farintyre is Miss Dormer’s promised husband.

CHAPTER XII.

INTELLECTUAL COQUETRY.

“I CAN tell you one thing, my dear Rora,” and Mr. Thomas Skelton, as he speaks, arranges his polished, pointed boots in an attitude of graceful ease above the level of his head. “Neither of the three Misses Skelton is looking younger. For Pansy there never was much hope. Our fond mamma destined her from infancy for the church, but churchmen, as far as I can see, look upon thick ankles and solid waists much in the same light as the rest of us. Diana might have done better; she was not a style I admire myself,” says Mr. Skelton, with an air of connoisseurship. “Wiry, light-fleshed, plainish head, and a good deal more than enough of bone! Still among the small Eastern Counties’ squireens, Diana’s were a style of looks that

might have passed for breeding, if you had all had the sense to keep in England. Her day is over now."

"This brings it to me," observes Aurora blankly. "I suppose, T. S., you will be saying next that I am an old maid?"

T. S. glances round, languidly critical, at his younger sister's too rubicund charms.

Aurora is dressed, as usual, like a caricature of some other caricature. Three rows of mock pearls are arranged, Grecian fashion, round her head. She wears a peacock-hued pinafore with the singularly inappropriate motto, *l'homme propose*, worked in old English characters around the hem; bangles are about her wrists; beads about her throat; glaring knots of poppy-colored ribbon seem to have descended upon her whole person in a shower.

"You are not an old maid *yet*, my dear, but your state is cachectic—highly! You know Punch's advice to unmarried persons, as a body? My advice to the three Misses Skelton is; whatever the suitor, and whatever his fortune: Do."

Mr. Thomas Skelton is a cadaverous, rather elderly young gentleman, holding the rank of lieutenant in one of her majesty's foot regiments; a young gentleman beringed up to the knuckles, redolent of pretension, Ess bouquet, and tobacco-smoke, and who glories in knowing his own small world in particular, and human nature in the aggregate, on the very seamiest side. Not to be done at cards, or about a horse, or a billiard match, is T. S.; not to be deluded into believing in the honesty of man, far less of woman! In his mysterious theatrical information, his familiar stories of Lord A. or Viscount B., and his straight tips for the big races, Thomas Skelton is equally reliable. Sometimes he is amusing; especially when in an ultra-boasting vein, or delivering scraps of what one may call curacoa-and-seltzer philosophy at second-hand. Such men in his regiment as possess money or titles know him—to their cost. So, according to the Skelton family legends, do the higher circles of London society. Into these higher London circles we may not aspire to penetrate. A solitary illustration of Mr. Thomas Skelton's family relations bears so closely upon the history of other personages in this little drama that it must, with a somewhat reluctant hand, be portrayed.

"Very easy for you to say: Do! No girls ever had such

a poor chance as us." Aurora's English grammar is not perhaps up to the level of her other accomplishments. "Living about in invalid places where not a man you meet has got an inch of lung left, never going to any parties but those wretched pension dances, and obliged to hesitate over every penny we spend in dress."

Aurora glances ruefully at the actual, not overfresh condition of her poppy-colored ribbons.

"I must confess you are rather heavily weighted," says T. S., turning over a foot in order that he may feast his eyes, as he discourses, on the faultless perfection of its boot and gaiter. "In the first place—well, 'Handsome is as handsome does,' the proverb says, but, as regards marriageable girls, the proverb says bosh. No one at the present age of the world cares a fig about a girl's doings, so long as she handsome *is*. And the three Misses Skelton are not handsome. In the second place there is the mamma."

Alas, for the man, said Jean Paul Richter, who has not learned in reverencing his own mother to reverence all womankind!

"Men, you see, have a trick of looking at a girl's *mater*, and thinking what the girl herself is likely to become. And men—you ought to learn this, all of you, from the mamma, downward—you ought to work it in golden letters round these ridiculous pinafores—men abhor electro-plate."

"Electro-plate! I declare, T. S., you get more rude in your manners every time you come to see us."

"Perhaps," says T. S., coolly, "I see more, every time, to make me rude. I have a vested interest, remember, in my sisters marrying or not marrying. Each year you go on like this, wandering from the Riviera to Switzerland, and back again from Switzerland to the Riviera, you spend more capital. Each year the prospects of my own final smash grow more distinct—"

"T. S.! For gracious sake take care you are not overheard!"

The brother and sister are exchanging these affecting confidences while Thomas Skelton smokes his after-dinner pipe on the Hotel Scherer terrace; and Aurora glances round, with alarm, in the direction of the salon windows.

"I don't mean to say that anything could stave the smash off now," proceeds Mr. Skelton, in a lower voice. "Unless I can marry an old woman with the ready, another six

months will see the end of it.” And this candid young gentleman thrums a tune upon the arm of his chair with the fingers of his cadaverous, prematurely nerveless hand. “If my sisters had found husbands in their youth and—well, if anything *had* happened to the mamma, and she had only cut up decently, I might have gone to the dogs at a less rapid pace than I am doing now.”

There is a minute or two of silence after this. Then, “If a girl happens to be the fashion, men follow each other, like a flock of sheep, in their admiration of her,” cries Aurora tearfully. “We see that in the case of this weak, foolish young Longmore I have been telling you about. Now honestly, T. S., forgetting that I am your sister, do you not think I have as much pretension to beauty as Joyce Dormer?”

Mr. Thomas Skelton turns his head with the natural indifference that the subject engenders in him. He looks at Aurora, slowly, from head to foot.

“Quite honestly, my dear, and forgetting altogether that you are my sister, I think you were nicer looking four or five years ago.” This is his ingenuous answer. “At the same time, you are a long way the best of the family. There, I speak without reserve. If I was forced to take one of my sisters about the world, for a wager, say, as belonging to myself, I—dash it all!” cries T. S., immensely tickled by his own delicate humor, “I believe, when it came to the push, I should put the three Misses Skelton, impartially, in a hat, and draw!”

Aurora’s lip quivers. “A pity Mr. Thomas Skelton did not arrive in Clarens a little sooner. He might have joined the train of Joyce Dormer’s admirers! Admirers,” adds the young lady with bitter emphasis, “to be discarded the moment Mrs. and Miss Dormer felt assured of the serious intentions, the solid thousands a year, of this poor infatuated John Farintyre.”

“Joyce Dormer is good form,” remarks T. S., speaking as one having authority. The young gentleman, it will be observed, has fixed opinions respecting all subjects in heaven and on earth, a complete aphoristic theory of the universe, ever ready for enunciation. “Not pretty exactly, but the look of blood about her—little head well set on sloping shoulders, clean-cut ankles, long throat. Just the sort of look that the Skelton family has not. Met the girl at

Aldershott balls. Met the girl at Woolwich. Never took the trouble to be introduced! Never any spare dances on *my* card."

Mr. Thomas Skelton pauses. Almost at the same moment the tall figure of Hugh Longmore draws near through the twilight; Hugh Longmore, dull-hearted enough after bidding Joyce farewell, looking blankly forward to an evening (to a life) on which neither blue eyes shall smile nor deffest, exquisite strains of music make glad.

And Aurora holds out to him the hand of frank forgiveness. Oversensitive pride, undue reserve, are assuredly not among the sins of Mrs. Skelton's daughters.

"Welcome back to the land of the living, Mr. Longmore. You have been seeing Mrs. and Miss Dormer off at the station? Naturally! We remarked your place was vacant at the *table d'hôte*. Mr. Farintyre I am told accompanies them as far as Turin, but to be sure, that may be only hearsay. *One would hope so.* You have not met my brother yet—the real original T. S.? Allow me to introduce Mr. Thomas Skelton, Mr. Longmore."

Young Longmore bows; mentally summing up his chances of decent escape at the earliest opportunity.

"You will find it dull work in Clarens without your friends. We get up a round game of an evening when it is too cold to go out—penny baccarat, you know, nothing to ruin anybody. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas first brought baccarat into fashion in the hotel and ma keeps the bank. Sometimes we have a little music, but of course," Aurora's tone is archly interrogative, "Mr. Longmore won't care for anything but violin music now."

Mr. Longmore's answer is to the effect that he cares for all music that is good; and, as he speaks, his eyes wander along the terrace; through the darkness he sees the wooden stairs, at the top of which a golden head, a girl's voice, pure as morning, were wont to welcome him.

"That's just my case," observes T. S., with his drawl. "Don't care a curse for amateurs and pianoforte players. Give me your operatic tip-toppers—Patti and Trebelli—or nothing. Them's my maxims."

The young Oxonian turns away in silence. Mr. Thomas Skelton, thin-skinned, like most gentlemen of his class, feels both movement and silence to be aggressive; and Mr. Thomas Skelton retaliates thus:

"Dormer? Dormer? Thought I recognized the Dormer girl somewhere about this morning. Hanging out, do you say, Aurora, at this hotel?"

"Mrs. and Miss Dormer have been spending a week in Clarens. They started an hour ago for Italy. Oh, and Joyce Dormer is quite too lovely!" cries Aurora with effusion. "All the gentlemen went wild about her. The dearest little innocent face you ever beheld!"

"Innocent!" repeats T. S., with an unpleasant chuckle. "Then it could scarcely be the Joyce Dormer I have met at the Woolwich and Aldershott balls. The girl I mean is a girl with a history, you might say—a girl with several histories, Item: a well-set throat, a complexion, a pair of blue eyes, and a fiddle. A girl who has just netted some awfully rich cad out of the city—pickles, blacking, shares—I don't know how the fellow made his money—of the name of Farintyre."

A rush of hot anger thrills through Longmore's breast. The fingers of his right hand, loosely swinging at a convenient distance of two or three feet from Mr. Thomas Skelton's head, clinch involuntarily. Then he cools down: by a strong effort at self-mastery, makes no sign. What business is it, in sooth, of his, if men speak lightly or loyally of John Farintyre's betrothed? What to him is Joyce Dormer? A memory of heaven-blue eyes, of gracious sound and movement, of a pair of white, thyme-scented hands, held for a too brief second, before his face in the mountain moonlight.

"Yes, it was at an Aldershott ball that I first met her." And T. S. settles himself into a position as nearly vertical as the nature of M. Scherer's garden chairs will permit. "Let me see, that must be something like two years ago last May. Miss Dormer was in the bloom of her first season. White muslin, lilies-of-the-valley, constant reference to mamma, and blushes. Usual attributes," says this profound and original cynic, "of the bread and butter *ingénue*. Next time I saw her was in August of the same year—down at Cowes, you know—everybody of one's set there—Joyce Dormer among the rest, in all the importance of a given-out engagement. She and her mother between them had played their game well, had bagged Roger Tryan, the third or fourth biggest matrimonial catch, as it was thought, of the season."

“Roger Tryan!” cries Aurora Skelton. “What! *the* Roger Tryan who loses such shocking sums of money at Monte Carlo, and who people declare is such a broken-down *dangerous* sort of person?” adds the young lady, casting down her eyelids prettily.

“The dangerous broken-down sort of person, at the time Joyce Dormer accepted him, was the most popular speculation out, heir to a fine landed property, and one of the handsomest fellows about town. Deuced proud the Dormers were of the engagement,” says Mr. Thomas Skelton. “Recollect it all as if it was yesterday. Tryan had a steam yacht down at Cowes (Lord Bartie Stornoway, intimate friend of my own, bought her when the smash came), and Mrs. and Miss Dormer, dressed like sisters, used to be seen everywhere with him. The two prettiest women in Cowes, some men thought, but I never myself cared much about your iceberg beauties. Never took the trouble to be introduced either to mother or daughter! Yes, the marriage was to be in October—remember the date because my friend Lord Bartie had been asked to be best man. Dreadfully bored his lordship was at the prospect! Kept away from the moors, you know, and that.” Aurora Skelton at this juncture grows interested.

“And the wedding after all did *not* come off,” she remarks. “That much, I suppose, is certain.”

“Well, no,” answers T. S. with a yawn. “The wedding did not come off. Roger Tryan’s father took it into his head just then to fall ill; more inconvenient still, he took it into his head, on his death-bed, to turn virtuous. Old gentleman, you see, like most of the name, had lived every hour of his life, while he could live them, and had accumulated debts of honor and otherwise, chiefly otherwise, that there was no means but one of meeting. That means was—to quash the entail. Roger Tryan, it seems, held quixotic notions about honor, thought it a fine thing to ease the old man’s conscience and whitewash the parental memory by beggaring himself. And between them—never took the trouble to enter into the legal details—they managed it, without consulting Mrs. Dormer, you may be sure! The father died in the odor of sanctity, and the son’s income came down with a run from thousands to tens. No quixotic notions, myself, in the matter of

money," says Mr. Thomas Skelton. "If a fond parent of my own was to drop off the perch to-morrow, I—"

"You are a horrid boy!" interrupts Aurora, slapping him playfully on the shoulder. "I declare you shall not talk so! Mr. Tryan is quite out of society—we never met him at a single Nice ball, and I am sure," the young lady gives a bashful glance at Longmore, "one would not repeat half the stories they tell about him. Still, it was awfully nice of him to sacrifice his own interest to the family name! Joyce Dormer, or any girl of generous, delicate feeling, would appreciate such conduct."

"Generous feeling! Delicate feeling," repeats T. S. with elliptic contempt. "In the present advanced state of liberal education! In a girl as well known for her worldly wisdom as Joyce Dormer!"

Young Longmore turns sharply aside; indignation, something painfuller far than indignation—a suspicion that the things he hears may be within the pale of truth—holding him dumb.

"It was said by some people that she fretted. No doubt she did fret—over the loss of the estate, not the lover! Remember the first time I saw her again next winter, her and her mother, at one of the Woolwich balls. Awfully skinny about the collar-bones Miss Joyce Dormer had grown, had a color that looked like rouge—believe it was rouge, now one thinks of it—on her cheeks. All the same she never wavered as to her 'duty.' Let a well-brought-up girl alone for that, when duty means money. Within a fortnight of the old man's death, Roger Tryan was sent to the right-about (consoled himself tolerably quick, though! Not the sort of a fellow to wear willow for any coquette of them all.) And before next winter was over Miss Dormer and her blue eyes and white throat had been bid for again; this time by a man old enough to be her grandfather, Sir Kenneth Grant."

"Bid for! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, T. S. The way you young men talk is positively too odious. What do you say, Mr. Longmore?"

Mr. Longmore says nothing. He gazes toward the western horizon, the horizon whither Joyce is traveling, with Farintyre for an escort. And his heart is sore within him; a feeling curiously near to personal shame causes his breath to come thick and fast.

“It was as much a matter of bidding as anything that goes on at Tattersalls’ sales,” says T. S. coolly. “After the Tryan business blew over, the girl came more in fashion than ever, collar-bone and rouge notwithstanding. Lawson of ‘Ours’ went wild about her, and there was Ian McIan, the big Highlander, the Vesey Armytage of the Fusiliers. And then, quietly, one fine morning, Mrs. Dormer gave out that her daughter was engaged to Sir Kenneth Grant, and would be married before the end of the season. Why *that* affair never came off no one knew for certain. I have reason to believe,” says T. S., in a tone suggesting backstair information, “that Sir Kenneth Grant repented him, ere it was too late, of his bargain, and had to bleed pretty freely to get out of it. Since then, Mrs. and Miss Dormer have taken a good deal to intellectual coquetry and the Continent. Know heaps of fellows who have met them on their travels. Music, poetry, sad-colored draperies, ‘going on to Naples to join Mr. Dormer and the tea-pots.’ That’s about their present figure—the figure, it seems, that has proved one too many for this idiot, Farintyre.”

“And Mr. Roger Tryan consoled himself,” remarks Aurora, presently; the drawling, illiterate accents of T. S. having lapsed into silence.

“Roger Tryan fell into good hands, my dear. Roger Tryan’s money matters were not so desperate but that he could still find a friend in need in this wicked world. Notably,” says Thomas Skelton with emphasis, “a friend with a wife. Surely, knocking about down in the South of France, some of you girls must have come across Nessie Pinto?”

“Nessie Pinto, her red umbrella, her husband, her lap-dog—and Roger Tryan! Well, yes, we have come across them rather too often,” says Aurora, playfully. “The group is one of the Nice institutions. People used to say—only, of course, ma never lets us listen to such things—that Roger Tryan more than once has had to pay the Pintos’ gambling losses as well as his own.”

“I’ve no doubt of it. A fellow who would do himself out of his own birthright would be madman enough even for that.”

And rising from his chair, T. S. whistles, yawns, stretches his arms; then lounges, hands in pockets, after the manner

of his tribe, into the salon; whither the interests of this narrative do not, happily, require us to follow him.

Longmore takes a few impatient steps along the terrace. Profoundly calm, as though no storm had ever convulsed her breast, shimmers Lake Lemane. Sweet smell the autumn roses as on that first evening when he and Joyce started together along the chestnut avenue toward Glion. Half a score of stars glimmer mild in the gray-blue heaven. The young man feels that Nature makes mock at him, so utterly is the chord she strikes at dissonance with his own harsh and jarring thoughts. At some hundred paces' distance he sees the familiar wooden staircase up which his steps were first drawn by the magic of Joyce's violin. No light shines from the windows on the first floor, no serenest girlish voice renders night musical with its ring.

And standing here, bitterly musing, young Longmore deducts what moral he may from the coarse and idle talk to which he has newly listened.

He feels almost as one might feel who should be shown a vile photograph of some dear face, forever lost; the lines horribly like in their unlikeness, although the delicate, the ineffable grace of the original have vanished. Can *this*, then, not the dream he dreamed of her, be Joyce Dormer?—this girl who could forsake her lover when fortune was blindest, who has been hardened by a trio of London seasons, who is well known at Woolwich and Aldershot. An intellectual coquette “using the past to give pathos to the little new song that she sings,” and converting even her music, the art for which she so deftly simulates passion, into a tool of vanity.

“You will join us in the salon, Mr. Longmore, will you not?” says Aurora Skelton, in dulcet accents, at his elbow. “Of course we have no classic instrumental music to offer; still, when the round game is over, if you would care for one of my simple ballads, as you used?”

But Longmore, as untempted by penny baccarat as by the siren persuasion of Aurora's voice, has vanished in the twilight.

CHAPTER XIII.

THIS TERRIBLE MRS. PINTO.

So falls the curtain on Clarens, so ends the bitter-sweet episode in minor of Hugh Longmore's life.

Mrs. Dormer and Joyce spend the remaining weeks of autumn at the Italian lakes; Christmas sees them at San Remo, Mrs. Dormer having heard news that makes her wisely cautious of approaching Monte Carlo more nearly. And then, toward the end of January, spring bursts upon the Riviera. The mimosa's golden clouds, the young corn's emerald green, the almond blossoms, the violet-scents, remind Joyce hourly that Easter draws on apace; that her life, with all its still fair possibilities, may, in another few weeks, be hers no longer, but the property of Mr. John Farintyre.

Why, in this heaven of blue weather, not go on to Rome at once? Mrs. Dormer throws out the suggestion one delicious morning on the San Remo sea-walk, throws it out in a quiet, negative manner, savoring not of premeditation. Why not secure a short space of picture-seeing and Campagna-visiting to themselves before the onerous business of millinery and dress-making is forced upon their hands?

"Or get over the onerous millinery business now, and go to Rome, with an unburdened conscience," Joyce answers, her tone betokening more interest than the subject of bridal preparations usually awakens in her. "I have heard you say, mamma, that there are no shops, short of Paris, to compare with the Nice shops. Why not spend the next few weeks there? A change would put us in spirits, perhaps, nerve us up for the inevitable. I—I mean for Easter, and all that Easter will bring with it."

The girl breaks off her speech curtly, and with an over-rapid change of color.

Is the moment a favorable one for giving a gentle blow to the absent? Mrs. Dormer judges it to be so; and, for the first time since a certain momentous night in Clarens, approaches the forbidden subject of Roger Tryan.

"If things had turned out differently, if we had had the protection, even, of your father's presence"—poor, inno-

cent Mr. Dormer, looking after his tea-pots in Naples!—"we might have spent the winter surrounded by our Nice friends. I had not sufficient moral courage to take you there alone. Dear Lady Joan Majendie wrote to me, Joyce, when we were at Bellagio."

"She did so, mother. I remember the expression of your face as you read Lady Joan Majendie's letter!"

"At the time, I shrunk from putting that letter into your hands, yet I can scarcely doubt that you guess at its contents. An old acquaintance, my poor child, whom you and I scarcely wish to encounter, is wintering with his friends at a convenient distance from the Monte Carlo gambling-tables—"

"You mean Roger Tryan," interrupts Joyce, tracing a monogram—who shall say of what initials?—with the point of her umbrella, in the sand. "Dark hints in John Farintyre's letters made me suspect the truth a good many weeks ago. But what if he be? Lady Joan is also in Nice, and can protect us. Are we never to enter any town during the remainder of our mortal lives for fear of coming across Mr. Roger Tryan?"

"You do not think that to see him, an unpoetized fact, in the society of Major and Mrs. Pinto, would jar upon one's taste?"

"I think that all such weakness may be cured by heroic treatment, mother. The good old legend of the Spartans and the Helots teaches us that much. We spoke of these things before, if you remember," Joyce adds with firmness, "one night in Clarens, and we decided that for me to encounter such a sight might be salutary. It could surely not be more dangerous to see Roger Tryan once than to think of him constantly."

There is latent wisdom in these words that Mrs. Dormer is prompt to recognize. Joyce has not been getting on well as could be wished, of late. She works overmuch at her music like one who would fain force mental rest through bodily exhaustion. Her eyes are heavy of a morning, feverish at night. Her flesh wastes. The San Remo doctors have hinted at "weak action of the heart." Who shall say that to brave the worst, to see Roger Tryan sunk in the social scale, a gambler, a castaway, to see him, even, at the side of this terrible Mrs. Pinto, might not prove a wholesome tonic?

Nothing of course would suit them better than to spend four or five weeks in Nice, if an apartment for so short a term could be hired. One might, at least, write letters of inquiry to some of the agents.

"The place is really so large," muses Mrs. Dormer. "We should be so safely hemmed in by our own set of acquaintance, that I am tempted to run the risk. Such persons as Major and Mrs. Pinto would spend more of their time in the congenial atmosphere of Monte Carlo than in Nice. One might be half a winter there without encountering any of the deplorable class of English to which poor Mr. Tryan now belongs."

In which surmise little Mrs. Dormer, with all her surface knowledge of the world, proves wrong.

The change of plans is carried out, an apartment secured, and for the first few days after arriving in Nice everything goes on with deceitful smoothness. Old friends and acquaintance are to be met with at every turning; cards of invitation pour in. Joyce's color at the end of eight-and-forty hours begins to brighten. Mrs. Dormer, easily reassured in matters physiological, makes up her mind that stronger tonics will not be needed. All that the girl needed was change, "a restorative stimulant to the force-centers." She had grown hipped at San Remo; had dreamed over her music too exclusively, lived alone too much; eaten too little. Now, if one can but rouse her interest in the millinery or bridal business of the next four or five weeks—as a mere call on dormant energy, it matters little whether the occasion be one of pleasure or pain—steer clear, let us hope, of all that can rekindle past folly, futile sentiment, and afterward trust to Roman sunshine, Roman sight-seeing, until Easter!

Things, I repeat, have gone on with deceitful smoothness for some days. There appears a *deus ex machinâ* upon the scene. Then does Mrs. Dormer gain such insight into Deplorable Classes, their words and ways, as sends all optimist hope, all euphemistic commonplace, to the winds.

And the insight comes at first-hand. The *deus ex machinâ* takes the form of this terrible Mrs. Pinto herself.

CHAPTER XIV.

D E T E R I O R A T I O N .

“*Couche-toi, Mufti, couche-toi!*” cries a voice in rasping Anglo-French accents. “Mr. Tryan, would you have the kindness to hold my poor darling’s chain? He has taken up the most uncomfortable trick of barking at odd-looking people. *Couche-toi, Mufti, donc, mauvais sujet que tu es.*”

Nice lies aglow in the transparent January noontide, and Nessie Pinto, with her scarlet umbrella, her lap-dog, her husband, and her husband’s friend, has for more than an hour paced up and down the most conspicuous *allée* of the Promenade des Anglais. Tiring of this at last, the lady turns into a side-path, where, by evil chance, two plainly dressed English ladies sit reading under shadow of the palms; the “odd-looking people” at whom Mufti, guided we may suppose by some finer canine instinct, has thought fit to bark—Joyce Dormer and her mother.

Nessie is a tall-statured, large-limbed goddess of the type Rubens loved to paint. A pyramid of bleached golden hair towers, cloud-like, above her forehead. She wears (even in this divinest sunshine) a complexion; item: inordinate jewelry, inordinate heels to her boots, over-tight gloves, and a throat as heroically bared as that of a German student at a ball.

Nessie Pinto is, by her own acknowledgment, thirty-four years old.

Look at her in repose, the coal-black eyes well open, the scarlet lips tightly shut, and the sternest critic could scarcely fail of calling her a handsome woman. Let her grow animated, and—hey, presto!—charm vanishes. The smile is mean, displaying—fatal defect—more of gums than of teeth; the black eyes lack steadfastness; the complexion, brilliant though it be, is of texture too opaque to admit of a blush; supposing, always, that the art of blushing were among Nessie Pinto’s acquirements!

The same critic watching Joyce Dormer in one of her least animated moods might, with argument on his side, dispute the girl’s claim to beauty, pronounce her expression listless, her coloring insipid; her eyes, despite their

blue, cold. But let Joyce Dormer wake up, touch the strings of her Stradivarius, speak of a theme or of a person she loves, and mark the change—the eloquent blood quick mantling under the too-clear skin, the rare smile displaying a row of porcelain teeth, the flashes of light and darkness, of tenderness and indignation, to which the “cold” blue eyes can be the channel!

The beauty of the woman, in brief, is physical; of the earth earthy; a coarse page that the crowd who run may read. The loveliness of the girl is spiritual; something to be felt, like a verse by Shelley or a melody by Schubert.

And at the present miserable crisis of Joyce Dormer's history, the beauty that is of the earth earthy would seem beyond doubt or question to be in the ascendant.

“Mamma, did you remark who passed upon our left?” asks the poor girl, very low, and with a trembling lip. “That lady must be Mrs. Pinto. Yes, there can be no doubt about it. We have heard the description so often of the Frenchified husband, the umbrella, the lap-dog, and Roger Tryan.” And though Joyce feels that the heart in her breast has turned to ice, she brings out the name of her old lover with a kind of forced courage.

Marking her place with a slender, gloved finger, Mrs. Dormer looks up from her book—“Mill on Liberty.” It is one of her few dogmas that no one day should pass without reading a chapter of John Stuart or Buckle, “simply as a kind of tuning-fork, to raise one's mind above the dead-level pitch of frivolity.” Her gray eyes, fresh and wondering as a child's, turn placidly in the direction whither Joyce had bidden her look.

“The people with the umbrella and the dog—for a moment it occurred to me that the creature might have barked at us under orders! Yes, I remarked them. This terrible Mrs. Pinto, if it be she, is really handsome, or would be handsome *with* education, and *without* paint. One mourns always over a nice-looking, hopelessly vulgar woman. The world is not so full of beauty that we can afford to have raw material thrown away.”

The speech is characteristic. If Mrs. Dormer meditated destruction to her worst enemy, she would plan her campaign from the vantage-ground of taste; would scathe her foe by some calmly crushing analysis of flounce, head-dress,

or complexion, yet give no sign that human passion, nor artistic feeling, lent animus to the blow.

“Would you have believed, mother, that any man’s taste could so deteriorate? I regret nothing, of course—”

Mrs. Dormer’s pulse gives just one throb of triumph.

“And everything connected with Roger Tryan belongs to the dear old days that are past and done with. Yet to think of a taste that was once refined, to think of the Roger Tryan we knew, sinking to associates like these!”

On occasions, rare and pointedly well-selected, Mrs. Dormer’s vision changes focus. She becomes short-sighted now. Disengaging a double eyeglass from her waist-belt, she holds it up for some seconds upon the bridge of her delicate nose.

“I quite agree with you, my love, about deterioration in a general way. You did not, I think, read that little book of Professor Lankester’s? Really his remarks about our ruined cousins, the Ascidians, are most suggestive. Are we hopelessly degenerate? Is the whole human race drifting on to the condition of an intellectual barnacle, or is it not?”

At this question, still more at the smooth, chill tone in which it is put, Joyce turns impatiently aside.

“We have,” proceeds Mrs. Dormer cheerfully—“men and women as well as barnacles—three possibilities open to us; balance, elaboration, degeneracy. There is no standing still. As regards the group around yonder red umbrella, I must confess the different members composing it appear to me in singularly harmonious keeping.”

“Mother—”

“I speak with deliberation, Joyce. Accompanying such a lady, and such a lap-dog, it is natural and fitting, within a given radius of Monte Carlo, to see a pair of do-nothing, hope-nothing English loungers, who have once been gentlemen.”

“Once been? Mother, you are severe. Do you mean that Roger Tryan could ever cease to be *that*?”

The group around the red umbrella is by this time far out of hearing of Mrs. and Miss Dormer’s voices. But as Joyce speaks Tryan’s name he turns (in obedience, it would seem, to a short whisper from Nessie Pinto) and recognizes her.

The man and girl who, during two or three love-lit

months, found heaven, a passionate one, each in the other's eyes, have met again—thus!

Moved by a sudden reasonless impulse, Joyce Dormer starts to her feet. She forgets Major and Mrs. Pinto, forgets all the eyes and tongues of the crowded Promenade des Anglais. It seems to her only that her lost lover's face says, "Come," and that she must obey him.

Mrs. Dormer, who forgets nothing, rises also. Shutting up John Stuart Mill, Mrs. Dormer rests her firm small hand upon her daughter's arm, stands for a moment or two as though absorbed in the fair panorama of the sea and shore, then turns away in an exactly opposite direction to that taken by Roger Tryan and the Pintos.

"It is time for us to be going homeward, Joyce. Glorious though this sunshine is, I should like to have one more practice of our new 'Poème Symphonique,' and our friends have promised to be with us early."

For already Mrs. Dormer has started a weekly afternoon, one that even amidst the formidable competition of Nice "afternoons," bids fair for popularity.

"What are we speaking about?" she runs on, with the perfect naturalness that is the most difficult of arts. "Mr. Tryan—of course, and those distressing friends of his. Yes, poor Roger was a gentleman by birth; I used once to think a gentleman in taste. But he has gone downhill fast." Mrs. Dormer shows sufficient interest in Roger Tryan's pace to give a pretty shudder. "We are the slaves, all of us, of environment. A white poppy, you know, loses its whiteness if its grow among colored ones. Should Roger Tryan change as much during the next two years as he has done during the last, he will have sunk below the level of his friend and associate—Nessie Pinto's husband."

And it would be hard, even for Mrs. Dormer, to utter a prediction more cruel.

CHAPTER XV.

SHE THAT IS KINDEST.

NESSIE PINTO's husband is a slim-waisted, shabbyish, orange-bearded little major, verging on fifty. Something in the cut of his gaiters, the arrangement of his neck-tie—

some expression in the furtive eyes that never, for an instant, encounter yours, would make you, at a first glance, connect Pinto with British book-making and the British ring. At the next, you are inclined to set him down as the out-at-elbows manager of a traveling French circus, his big-checked suit, much-worn yellow gloves, and Frenchified air—shall we add, his wife and Mufti?—giving Major Pinto a foreign varnish, to which, perhaps, an article of plain home manufacture might be preferable.

Did not Talleyrand say he misdoubted any Englishman who spoke French too well?

Pinto, in a certain sense, speaks French too well; ungrammatically as a porter, but with an absence of foreign accent, an acquaintance with idiom, especially the idiom of the gaming-table and the turf, that render Frenchmen themselves (such Frenchmen as are his fellows in the neighborhood of Nice and Monaco), uncertain as to his nationality.

In what branch of our service Nessie's husband obtained his rank of major, I am ignorant. He shows a shyness, not uncommon among brave men, in speaking of his military achievements; but will boast freely enough of old sporting exploits in the eastern counties, and has been known, when unusually sentimental in the small hours, to allude, over a fourth glass of whisky and water, to his "boyish days at Eton."

The Pintos' means of subsistence may be represented by X. Nessie, in her higher flights of rhetoric, has been heard to talk of Pinto's allowance. But then Nessie has also been heard to talk of "our county," "our conservative influence," "Pinto's family," "Pinto's stud of horses." Conjecturally, it is believed that this gentleman was once connected with the stables of a notorious peer at Newmarket. As a matter of fact, it is known that he quitted Newmarket abruptly, on the morrow of a darkly inauspicious Two Thousand, never more to show his face in that or any other English racing locality.

Upon the surface, Major Pinto's way of living would seem unpremeditated as a butterfly's—now shooting in Corsica, now baccarat-playing in Naples and Florence, now gambling—looking on, perhaps, at the ventures of his wife rather than actually risking money of his own—at Monte Carlo. I should also add, as a possible source of revenue,

the friendship, during the past two years, of Roger Tryan. How did that friendship come about? How sunk the high-souled son, the chivalrous lover, the man whose breath was more than a bond from other men, to association so unworthy?

The writer who could solve that question, analyze the hold coarseness will gain, under some adverse conditions, upon men of delicate moral fiber, might contribute a chapter worth reading to the natural history of human weakness.

To start with, there was the factor that brings about half the loves and friendships in the world—propinquity.

In the first gloomy days succeeding his father's death and his own altered fortune, it chanced that Roger Tryan came across Nessie and her husband at one of the remoter Bavarian watering-places. Some years before, when Tryan was a Cambridge undergraduate, he and Pinto had formed, or so the fact stood recorded in the major's plastic memory, a hunting-field acquaintance. This acquaintance, renewed in a spot where a two-days' old "Times," sulphur-water, buckhorn carvings, and a midday German dinner were the main resources, soon developed into intimacy; accident ripened it into something, which, lacking a better word, we may call friendship. In the course of a hill excursion to some neighboring ruins, Roger Tryan dutifully attendant at the side of Mrs. Pinto's donkey, it came to pass that the lady's steed slipped, and that her cavalier, in saving her from an awkward fall, met, himself, with a sprained ankle.

The circumstances were by no means romantic, the sprain was not severe. For more than a week, however, Roger could not put his foot to the ground, and during this week, Mrs. Pinto, carried away by the grateful impulse of the moment, constituted herself his nurse.

And to do so required some amount of moral hardihood. Major Pinto, within four-and-twenty hours of the accident, was obliged to run away on business—that inscrutable, that convenient Pinto business, of which no man has ever known the nature! He remained absent ten days. But Nessie was not a woman to flinch at trifles; certainly not a woman to stifle grateful impulses out of regard for the shallow good opinion of the world. The thirty or forty English people at Langen Waldstein might surmise, lift

their eyebrows, shake their heads, and pass upon the other side, an' they listed. Nessie had the courage of her opinions through it all. She was seen each morning tripping across the Kurgarten with flowers and wild strawberries to Roger Tryan's hotel. She chatted beside the invalid on his balcony, played chess and double-dummy for his amusement, dined with him—yes, and after dinner, a hundred or so eyes from the Kurgarten looking on, would prevail upon him to smoke his pipe and sip his brandy and seltzer (of which she partook exactly as she might have done had Major Pinto been present.)

It was this conduct, I think, that first won Tryan's respect.

Nessie's gratitude was exaggerated, an averted tumble from a donkey scarcely affording ground for melodramatic self-sacrifice. Her complexion, poor dear woman, was too much made up for morning wear in Langen Waldstein. Her aspirates and her syntax were alike open to animadversion.

But see what nobility of heart was hers, what courage, what stanchness!

Roger Tryan, bear in mind, had been newly galled to the quick. He felt bitter against Joyce Dormer for her infidelity, bitter against the whole tribe of worldly mothers, and the love yielded by their too obedient daughters, not to a suitor himself, but to the suitor's acres. Women of cultivation, of birth, of the world—ay, of *those* he had had ample experience. Was not Nessie Pinto richer in the fair womanly qualities of compassion and unselfishness than nine tenths of them?

And thus it happened, with a little help from without, that the rupture between Joyce Dormer and the man she loved became irreparable!

Pre-eminent among the small English colony at Langen Waldstein was Lady Joan Majendie, head of the great banking-house of Majendie & Colquhoun; a slight acquaintance of Roger Tryan's, an intimate friend of Mrs. Dormer's. In using the term head of the firm, I speak advisedly. Does not every one know what place Mr. Majendie—at this particular period going through a "cure" for rheumatism—holds in the firm and in his domestic relations? Mrs. Dormer was never without the amiable infirmity of title-loving common to the best of us. It was

her pleasure also to have a side entrance into as many different London circles as possible: the gay, the literary, the artistic, the Other-worldly.

Lady Joan Majendie constituted her Open Sesame to the Other-worldly.

At seasons when she felt sure of her audience—notably in Joyce's absence—little Mrs. Dormer has been known to speak of her dearest Lady Joan as "That Saint."

Well, that saint was here, in Langen Waldstein, bent on upsetting the belief of an idolatrous Catholic peasantry, while the poor banker meekly made his dinner off herbs or sipped and sat in sulphur. And on the first day Roger Tryan was able to limp forth from his hotel, leaning on Mrs. Pinto's arm (he could have got along well alone, but Nessie insisted upon enacting walking-stick), Lady Joan Majendie, bustling around on conversion work, in her poke bonnet, blue spectacles, and with her bag full of half-penny German tracts, met, and cut him.

One may honestly think that, in doing so, the saint acted according to her lights. Roger Tryan's late conduct, in respect of his father's debts, had sunk him to zero in Lady Joan's good graces. These high-flown deeds of abnegation were, according to her system of ethics, pure quixotism, a branch of human weakness to which saints, when solid pounds, shillings, and pence are concerned, are specially inimical. And now—"Ah, my friend," wrote Lady Joan, in a solemn note of warning to Mrs. Dormer, "now, his engagement to your dear Joyce scarce broken off, his social downfall fresh in men's minds, Mr. Tryan is to be seen publicly advertising himself at the side of a creature like this!"

Possibly, if Lady Joan Majendie's visiting-lists could have been scanned, creatures as faulty as Nessie Pinto had been found there. But these would be well-married creatures, or high-born creatures, or creatures strict, exceedingly, as to the tithing of mint, anise and cumin. Hard and fast lines must be drawn *somewhere*, especially by a saint who is connected with the mammon of unrighteousness through big banking interests. And, as I have said, Lady Joan Majendie, coming across Tryan and Nessie Pinto as they were slowly walking along the Langen Waldstein Kurgarten, looked very straight indeed from behind her blue spectacles, and cut Roger Tryan dead.

He enjoyed the humor of the thing immensely at the time, so did his companion. Major Pinto returned that evening, his business over, and Nessie, who really had a pretty talent for acting, depicted the scene in an improvised poke-bonnet, a pair of spectacles, and a bag, supposed to be full of "goody" literature, for her husband's diversion.

But Lady Joan Majendie's cutting was only the beginning of the end, and it may well be that the humor of the situation wore off to Roger Tryan's mind as he became more practically used to it.

In Langen Waldstein, as among certain London sets, the Majendie opinion carried weight—was acted upon. People had no worse things to say of Roger than that he was his own enemy; a Don Quixote, running his head against perpetual windmills; a Bayard, walking too high a plane for our poor nineteenth-century consciences! But how could ladies bow to Bayard when he elected to spend his mornings, afternoons, and evenings in the society of those terrible Pintos? Was not the easiest, the obvious solution, to follow the example of that dear, wise old serpent, Lady Joan—not bow at all?

And then it was that Joyce, remorse-stricken under the sense that she had treated him ignobly, eager for explanation, willing to repair her mother's first injustice and consider the world well lost so that she might but lose it for Roger Tryan—then it was that the girl heard of her lost lover in connection with Major and Mrs. Pinto.

"Break the painful truth to Joyce as tenderly as you can," wrote dear Lady Joan in a second letter to Mrs. Dormer. "If, indeed, you judge it wise to let Joyce know the truth at all. Mr. Roger Tryan is the devoted attendant of a quite too notorious Mrs. Pinto. I am afraid, from what Mr. Majendie tells me"—on rare occasions poor Mr. Majendie was thus pushed to the fore in the capacity of stalking horse—"that it does not better matters to add, Mr. Roger Tryan is the friend of Mrs. Pinto's husband."

The Langen Waldstein episode took place more than two years before the date of my story, and during these two years Roger Tryan's chance-formed intimacy with the Pintos has remained unbroken. His poverty, it must be borne in mind, was relative: an income remaining to him after

the elder Tryan's debts were paid that to many a small landholder or country vicar would seem competence, and that afforded much nice picking to his friend, Major Pinto; for this gentleman has ever believed, with Panurge, that it is a divine thing to lend, a heroic virtue to owe, and carries out his ideal of heroism fully in his every-day practice.

"We'll finish the winter off comfortably here in Nice," remarks Nessie's husband, as the trio saunter back from the Promenade des Anglais to Tryan's hotel, where the usual lunch and champagne await them; "spend the summer in Savoy—Eaux-les-Bains, or some of those places where a little quiet, friendly play goes on under the rose, and then run down to Corsica, say, in November. If a man can have a dinner of seven dishes with good wine for nothing anywhere, 'tis in Corsica. But, you know, my dear fellow," runs on Pinto, genially, "we must really set up joint housekeeping when next we settle down. Nessie says so." Roger Tryan at the present moment occupies a bachelor apartment in the Hotel des Trois Empereurs, while Major and Mrs. Pinto board at a second-class pension outside the town—that dreary Pension Potpourri to which Mrs. Skelton and her daughters give the name of home. "I've never known Nessie wrong yet in the matter of *l. s. d.* Whatever plans we decide on for the summer, we must take a flat between us next winter, and settle down to joint-stock housekeeping. It would be an economy in the end."

And an economy, no doubt, joint-stock housekeeping would prove—to Major and Mrs. Pinto!

CHAPTER XVI.

TO MONTE CARLO.

I HAVE said that Mrs. Dormer's weekly reception bids fair for popularity; it comprises more than the usual elements of success to-day. Two or three professional musical artists who gracefully keep themselves in the background in order that the amateurs shall shine; a young English lord, celebrated by his political pamphlets, *à la* Bradlaugh; an Austrian count with delicate Van Dyck fingers, a hectic flush, and a zither; some art-critics; a well-known, bare-throated, much-jeweled Spanish duke; an Italian poet, whose best meal of the day is made at the five

o'clock tea-tables; of intellectual ladies; a big, but well-thawed Oxford don; and three or four of the prettiest English women in Nice.

The reception is a success, and Joyce, whose face and manner are fuller of brightness than usual, brings tones such as she never brought before from the strings of Stradivarius. When all is over, however, when the last guest has departed, and the somber January twilight fills the room, the poor child sinks with weary relief into a chair beside the olive-wood fire and gazes into its ruddy depths with tired, aching eyes.

Carefully studying her daughter from the opposite chimney-corner, herself in shadow, Mrs. Dormer discerns that her cheek is of mortal pallor, the attitude of her limbs nerveless; a hollow, worn look is about her temples. A little time more, if she continue to make downward progress like this, and Joyce will be a girl no longer. Restless stirrings of vain passion, regrets beyond the reach of self-interest, beyond the power of will, are already doing their dreary work on outline and complexion.

A little time more—Mrs. Dormer realizes the fact with a start—and she might wake, some fine morning, to find herself the mother of an oldish daughter, if happily, next Easter—

Joyce breaks the silence abruptly, in a voice that rings almost with harshness through the refined, violet-scented room:

“Mother, how tired one gets of art and art-talk, and cultivated people, altogether, does one not?”

Mrs. Dormer answers in her most level, most evasive tone:

“I fancy our little party was a success, Joyce. Our socialist lord really gave us some socialist invective. Dear old Filippo Filippi recited only one poem on the wrongs of Italy, but recited it well. Our Austrian’s Van Dyck fingers were delightful on the zither. And as to you, Joyce—”

“I surpassed myself, mamma. My playing was like that of Joachim in his youth, with a touch of Neruda in her prime. My looks were those of a Saint Cecilia. A bit of mimosa that fell from my hair was distinctly precious. Unfortunately, these sugared things do not improve by keeping. I was told last winter at another afternoon party, here in Nice, that my head was like an abstraction of Fra Angel-

ico's, nay, even like a saint upon a gold ground of Cimabue's. The same discriminative critic, in rather more affected accents, told me the same thing to-day. Ought I to feel flattered, do you think?"

Mrs. Dormere skips nimbly away from the subject of intellectual tea-parties.

"You are physically overtaxed, child. You put too much emotion into your playing. That is the danger of the violin. Eminent medical men have told me so. To play as you have done to-day involves a state of 'nerve-storm,' for which the performer has to pay dearly afterward. And we have so much to get through this evening," Mrs. Dormer consults a tiny set of tablets that hang from her waist-belt—"Lady Joan Majendie's dinner; Mrs. Fitzpatrick's *tableaux vivants*; the Countess of Cairngorm's *séance*—"

"With a freshly-imported medium from New York, and entirely novel effects in the way of spirit-rappings and lime-light. What a programme of pleasure! First, the world."

"The world! In Lady Joan Maendie's house?"

"Yes, mother. These suave, serious parties, with their wines and plats, and pet dignitaries and unctuous talk, are the very acme of worldliness. Then the flesh. Then the—"

"My love!"

"Mamma, I am in no mood for any of it. I am sick, sick at heart to-night, weary, to desperation."

And in truth there is a white, fixed look round her lips that Mrs. Dormer knows; a look with which Mrs. Dormer grew unpleasantly familiar at the time of Roger Tryan's dismissal.

"If you are really overdone, Joyce, we will give up our engagements—nothing can be easier than to send excuses to all these people—and spend a quiet evening by ourselves. See," says Mrs. Dormer, drawing a letter, cheerfully, from her pocket; "I have something of a very important and very pleasant nature to consult you about. You know that I heard from John Farintyre this morning?"

"Yes, mamma."

The nearer they get to Easter the more does Joyce relegate the Farintyre correspondence to her mother.

"Well, he wants me to find out your tastes, clandestinely, poor fellow, about the resetting of some family diamonds. One of the best London houses has furnished patterns,

which he incloses, and— My dear Joyce, *are* you listening to a single word that I say, or are you not?"

Mrs. Dormer has crossed to her daughter's side. She stands there, John Farintyre's letter, the diamonds from one of the best London houses, between her hands.

For a moment or two Joyce remains dumb, motionless; then she starts quickly to her feet, such a blaze of color, of warmth, of eager, passionate longing, overspreading her tired face as makes her more than lovely.

"Mamma, dearest, you have been very good to me all my life, and I—have given you nothing but anxiety in return. That is the usual debtor and creditor account, I suppose, between parents and children. You are all goodness now. You wish, for my own sake, that I should be married, find a worthy husband in poor Mr. Farintyre, settle down, as other girls do, take an interest in my diamonds and my visiting-list, and be content. And I—mother, I will tell you the truth—I fret more over the happiness which I have lost, every day I live. When I saw Roger Tryan this morning, in the companionship," says the girl, with miserable emphasis, "*of his friends*, I knew that, were he to raise a finger, to-morrow I would be his wife, I would follow him—ay, to the uttermost ends of the world—"

"Joyce!"

"Oh, it is humiliating—shameful. I know everything you would say beforehand. You can not blush for my weakness more than I blush for it myself. Still, it is so. If sometimes I find myself thinking unawares of the sweetness there might be in life, I am really thinking of him. If I dream at night that my wedding-day has come, that I am taking oaths of love and faith before the altar, Roger Tryan—not the other—is at my side."

"All this is too painful."

Poor Mrs. Dormer, in truth, looks and feels as though earth, this excellent little planet that holds banking firms, titled persons, diamond necklaces, John Farintyres, were crumbling beneath her feet.

"The more painful because it is a fact. However, you need not be afraid for me," adds Joyce hurriedly.

"The worst is over. Considering that I have had strength to live through the last two years, I am not likely to die of a broken heart now. Not likely to die, and still

—Oh, mother! taking me in kindest pity, and knowing, as only you can, what a wreck my life is, will you grant me a favor to-night?”

“Joyce, do not look at me like that. Of course I will grant you any favor you choose to ask. You want to send excuses to Lady Joan, to the other people. It shall be done. You want—yes, dear child, I read your thoughts—to go away from Nice. We will start for Rome immediately. Our coming here was a mistake. It can be set straight at the very small cost of paying one month’s rent of this apartment. Naturally you are distressed at having to witness such a scene as came before our eyes to-day. You would like—”

“I would like, mamma,” cries Joyce with ashen, pleading face, “to go over to Monte Carlo to-night. I have heard you say often that Monte Carlo was a thing to be studied, a scene to be looked at, as we look at Pompeii or Herculaneum, without ethical bias— Well, and now I ask you, as I never asked anything before in my life, to take me there!”

The request, set down in black and white, may seem cold enough; made by Joyce with voice, eyes, lips, all quivering at passion’s white heat, even Mrs. Dormer melts—not without the sanction of reason. Persons accustomed to the sick will tell you how, in certain maladies, a patient, fever-tossed and distraught, has been known to dream of an herb or drug ignored by physicians that shall be his cure. Who can say that some kindred instinct is not working in Joyce’s sick heart, that the truest stroke of policy may not be to humor her in her whim?

“Would you wound yourself voluntarily, Joyce? Dear Lady Joan, from a sense of duty, has made inquiries about a most painful subject. Five evenings a week, it is said, these terrible Pintos spend at Monte Carlo! Surely I need not add more. You can not wish for a repetition of this morning’s scene—this morning’s scene, heightened by all the wretched accessories of Monte Carlo?”

“I wish to visit the place to-night, mother. From beginning to end of our music this afternoon, Stradivarius seemed to be giving me one message, pressing upon me one piece of advice, ‘Monte Carlo. Go to Monte Carlo.’ I heard the words in major and in minor, spoken by Beethoven and Mozart and Spohr! Oh, mamma, can it be possible that

to-night may be a turning-point, not for my outward life—that, of course, is settled—but for my heart, my peace? If there be a chance, a possibility, of my getting into a better road, is it not worth the trial?”

Mrs. Dormer looks obdurate—sure sign that it is Mrs. Dormer’s intention to surrender.

“The scheme is quite too wild. See how late it is, Joyce. Nearly six already.”

“The ‘gamblers’ train goes at half past seven, mamma. I have learned these wicked things through some of our unctuous friends’ denunciation of them.”

“And our engagements? If Lady Joan Majendie should hear—”

“I can not see that we must shape our lives to please Lady Joan Majendie. Lady Joan has been to Monte Carlo on errands of proselytism. Who shall say that you and I, mother, may not make some convert to-night?”

“But for you to be seen there, alone—I mean with so inefficient a duenna as myself!” Little Mrs. Dormer glances disparagingly at her own over-youthful image in the mirror. “It would simply not be respectable for us, unprotected, to show our faces on such a scene.”

“Of course it would not!” cries Joyce. “It behooves us, therefore, to take a protector. Where could we find better security than in the white locks of Filippo Filippi? You know that our poor poet, if he had the means, would go with us to any part of Europe. Ah, mamma!”—with quick, unwonted effusion she snatches her mother’s hand, she raises it to her lips—“shall I ever be able to repay you for your goodness? Shall I ever forget your unselfishness in allowing me to do this thing?”

“I—I wish one knew whether it was correct to wear a bonnet or a hat!” murmurs the elder lady, softly troubled. If the very temptation of Eve came to a woman of Mrs. Dormer’s type, her perplexity would be one of taste. Would it be correct to accept that apple from a comparative stranger, or would it not?

CHAPTER XXII.

SOLD.

THE preparations for their evening adventure are gone through with feverish haste by Joyce. Notes of excuse are

written and dispatched; Filippo Filippi is told, on a tiny sheet of pink paper, in Joyce's prettiest Italian, that two forlorn *donzella* mean, in less than an hour's time, to put themselves under his chivalrous escort. Then comes a harder task for the girl's overwrought powers—she must eat; Mrs. Dormer, whose sense of commonplace bodily comfort is always in its right place, averring that, whatever else be doubtful, an improvised dinner before they start is essential.

Human beings are exceedingly complicated machines, wound up by putting food in their mouths. With a prospect of unusual strain before one, let cold chicken and a glass of good Orvieto be taken as the best possible source of moral strength. Let the machine be wound up! Joyce strives bravely to obey. She drinks a glass of wine, she forces down morsel after morsel of food, feeling as though each must choke her and prove the last. Then she dresses, her mother's finer intuitions, having solved the important question of fit attire for Monte Carlo by gas-light—beaver hats, tied under the chin like those worn by Jane Austen's heroines; black dresses, black gloves, no ornaments, above all, *no veils*. "A veil worn under doubtful circumstances," said Mrs. Dormer, "may be construed into an excuse. An excuse is a self-accusation. It is one of those small matters about which a woman of delicate feeling can not be too solicitous." Ten minutes later they are making their way along the narrow, ill-lighted street in which Filippo Filippi lives.

"If Filippo should be out, should never have received our note!" Joyce suggests this as they wait inside the portecochère of the poet's house, a slow-footed old portress having gone up to the fourth étage in search of him.

"Worst still, if there should be a Signora Filippi," added Mrs. Dormer placidly.

For courageous ladies hunting lions, with a view to afternoon exhibition, are wholly ignorant of the lion's domestic comings and goings. Such cambric as the poet displays above his surtout is irreproachable. Notes sent through the post to a certain address command his presence. Filippo Filippi and his recitals are to be met at all the "best" houses in Nice. With what further details as to wife or fortune need the mind of a giver of parties, a purveyor of celebrities, be troubled?

"If there be a Signora Filippi, and she say nay—a hun-

dred times nay—we will go to Monte Carlo!” cries Joyce, with nervous haste. “Absurd to think that two strong-minded Englishwomen could not, under all circumstances, protect themselves! Why, with such a manner as I can put on when I choose,” and the girl draws her slender throat aloft, “I might pass quite well, little mother, for your chaperon.”

The contingency, however, does not arrive; the signora of Mrs. Dormer’s imagination exists not. Ere the portress has had time to shuffle down the hundred steps leading from the fourth story, Filippo himself appears upon the scene. Filippo, fur-cloaked, shivering with true Southern chilliness, at having to face a breath of evening air, but gallantly ready to accompany two pretty women to any part of Europe—so long, of course, as the price of his railway ticket be paid out of the pretty women’s pockets!

Filippo Filippi, content, like many another Italian patriot, to live out of the country for which, in rhyme, he is ready to give his blood, is a tall, grandly built Florentine of fifty-five or sixty; a man, every inch a poet—white-bearded, eagle-eyed, with a Titanesque head set finely on his shoulders, with just a flavor of garlic pervading his courtly presence. The fur on Filippo Filippi’s cloak may be past its prime; he wears a pair of oft-cleaned lemon-colored gloves, a pair of antique-polished shoes, a white cravat of the fashion of thirty years ago; and still the nameless look which, lacking a better word, we call distinction, is his.

Even among the cosmopolitan rabble that at this hour throngs the Nice platform, men feel inclined to ask the shabby old poet’s name. Men feel inclined to do more than ask the name of the two English ladies with their refined fair faces, their quiet dress and demeanor, whom the shabby old poet accompanies.

“Let us hide ourselves away, mother,” whispers Joyce, when they at length succeed in finding an empty carriage. “Make Filippo Filippi understand that we are spectators, not actors in the scene. Persuade him, above all, to speak no word of French or English.” She adds this quickly, and with a backward glance toward the station. “I have a suspicion that Major and Mrs. Pinto are close behind us. If we do not betray ourselves by our speech we may reach Monte Carlo unnoticed.”

The warning is given only just in time. Barely have they taken their places in the further, least-lighted compartment, barely has Mrs. Dormer whispered a significant hint to Filippo Filippi, when a loud voice and laugh are heard approaching along the platform. A moment later, and Mrs. Pinto, with bangles rattling and ribbons flowing—Mrs. Pinto, her husband, her dog, and Roger Tryan, come to a halt immediately beside the door of the carriage that holds Joyce Dormer.

“Room here?” asks Pinto, putting in his head with his air of easy familiarity. “That’s all right, Tryan—Nessie! Here you are. Empty carriage, or only a mounseer or two.” For here Major Pinto catches sight of Filippo Filippi’s distinctly un-British head. “Come, jump in.”

But Mrs. Pinto hesitates. “‘Dogs and persons under twenty-one years of age’ not admitted to the gaming-tables by a paternal administration,” she observes playfully. “What in the world are we going to do with Mufti?”

“You should have thought of that before you let Mufti follow you, my love,” cries Major Pinto.

Whatever the real state of things between this husband and this wife—and that it is a volcanic state, all such persons as know them well can certify—the surface of the crater bloometh greenly. You would say the Pinto household thought but with one mind, acted but with one intention, so nicely do Nessie’s little whims and fancies and forgetfulness piece in with the foregone conclusions of her lord.

“As we are here,” resumes that gentleman, “it is a shame you should be disappointed. You and Tryan had better go on to Monte Carlo together, Ness, and I’ll be a blessed martyr—take Mufti home. What do you say, Tryan? You don’t mind looking after Mrs. Pinto for one evening?”

For one evening! What has Roger Tryan’s whole bored life sunk to but “looking after” Mrs. Pinto—on race-courses, in public ball-rooms, at theaters, in every place, on every occasion, when Major Pinto’s time and talents can be elsewhere better employed.

“The ‘one evening’ must be a short two hours,” says Nessie, her foot upon the step. “Our pension gives a dance this evening. Mr. Tryan, you do not forget, I hope,

that your company is requested by the guests at the Pension Potpourri. You are coming, of course?"

Tryan answers with the stereotyped "delighted" that a man pushed into such a corner has no choice save to utter; entering the carriage, he takes a corner place opposite the wife of his friend.

But his tone is cold; so Joyce, in her fast-beating heart, decides; his manner listless. All the old bright look of youth and interest has died, although Roger Tryan is some years under thirty, from out his face.

That he has sunk to a lower level may be fact. *He is not content there.* And, oh! inexplicable human nature, the suspicion of his discontent half constitutes a hope in Joyce Dormer's breast.

Nessie Pinto has all the instability of manner that characterizes women of her class: at one minute is high-pitched, and self-conscious; at the next, noisily familiar; at the next, affectedly nervous. This horrible mistral! She will certainly get neuralgia if she remain exposed to it. Fancy having to appear at our pension ball with anything so quite too awful as a swelled face. If Mr. Tryan please, they will change places. And then, the places being changed, Nessie bethinks her that if she travel with her back to the engine she will have a sick headache. And then, going back, with clash of bangles and rustle of silks, to her first position, her thoughts revert to Mufti.

For what object but the attracting of attention (a pretty woman with a lap-dog being a degree more noticeable than a pretty woman without one) does poor Mufti exist? Pinto, in his rough fashion, cares for the creature, and is repaid by Mufti with lavish usury of love. Nessie, when once she quits the foot-lights, cares for nothing, will indeed vent any little social failure or disappointment upon the first object—generally Mufti—that comes across her.

"Be sure, Pinto, whatever you do, you see to my dear darling's supper. A minced chicken's leg, if they can find him one, and plenty of salt. Promise me sacredly you will not be off to your horrid whist club and forget him."

Major Pinto does not play a rubber of whist, certainly does not enter his club at this hour of the evening, once during the season. But Nessie is fictitious to the fingertips, compelled, even before no larger audience than Roger Tryan, to say the thing that is not.

"That is right," Pinto having sworn fidelity as regards the minced chicken's leg and the salt. "Now, have I got my scent-bottle? Those Monte Carlo rooms are so excruciatingly hot. Ah, here it is. Mr. Tryan, please, like a good creature, take care of my scent-bottle for me. And my purse? Surely, I can never have forgotten that." And Nessie goes through a pantomime of searching in her dress and jacket pockets. "Pinto, Pinto, my dear, don't go away. No Monte Carlo for me to-night, unless you are game to lend me half a dozen naps. I have left my purse behind."

Major Pinto's lips take the form of whistling. He buttons up his coat.

"You know I never encourage you in your pleasant vices, Nessie. If you gamble, it must be of your own pin-money." Major Pinto's wife's pin-money! "Haven't you any spare bracelets or rings about you?" he asks jocosely. "The croupiers know us pretty well by sight. They might allow you to stake in kind."

On this, Nessie Pinto bends over to Roger Tryan; with a supplicating clasp of her gloved hands, with a plaintive appeal in her belladonnaed eyes, she whispers a word or two in his ear.

"Stand banker? Why, of course I can. Ridiculous for you to think of going back." So replies a voice that sends the blood hurrying through Joyce Dormer's veins. "I would not advise you to endanger your luck by even a temporary loan of Pinto's napoleons. Good-night, old fellow." And the two men shake hands: little does either of them reck that it shall be for the last time! "Look well after your points at whist, and don't forget Mufti's supper. Mrs. Pinto and I feel in the vein. We are going to recoup ourselves at last for all old losses."

The guard at this moment approaches; he is just preparing to shut the door of the carriage when Mrs. Pinto jumps up, and stretching her head forth through the window, calls vehemently to her husband. One thing is still wanted—a kiss from Mufti. She would be sure of ill-luck did she depart without the dearest creature's caress. She *must* have it! And, indeed, a scene, an affectation, anything that shall bring her into notice, although it be but the notice of guards and railway servants, is a necessity to this woman's tawdry, restless, never-satisfied soul.

“Mufti, *embrasse moi*,” she shrieks in fluent, vilely accented French. “*Souhaite la bonne chance à ta Maman, petit brebis.*”

And then Pinto must hold the animal aloft for Nessie to kiss.

In palmier, more respectable days, Mufti, an actor of merit, took the leading part in a troupe of strolling dog performers, scaled ladders, played cards, smoked his cigarette, fought his duels as gravely as any gentleman in France. Sunk though he be in estate, some glimmering of self-respect would seem to linger in Mufti's conscience. He struggles, rolls his eyes, and cunningly resents the indignity put upon him by attempting to lick the rose-bloom from his mistress's cheek.

Nessie Pinto starts back, using a tolerably blunt English expletive; then, recovering her presence of mind, she insists that Mufti shall shake hands with Tryan.

“*Donne la patte à Monsieur, mon amour.* Yes, indeed, Mr. Tryan, you must. I will take no refusal. Whoever loves me loves my dog. Surely, after *that*, you will not have the heart to slight poor Mufti?”

And so on, *ad nauseam*; the usual tone of such women when they believe their power of fascination to be unlimited, and men's patience a thing of adamant.

Sick and chill, Joyce Dormer draws further back in her corner of the carriage.

“We ought never to have come,” whispers her mother, with a tenderness that almost wrings a sob from the girl's overcharged breast. “Change places quietly with me, dear child. You will at least not see the lady of the party from this side.”

But Joyce does not move. The heroic treatment which her own free-will has prescribed, shall be carried out, she resolves, without let or hinderance. They are here, on their road to Monte Carlo, with one object; to see Roger Tryan among the associates, the interests which occupy his life. Why seek to disguise the bitterness of such a draught? Is it not good for her to look her full, listen her keenest, and derive such quick, sharp benefit from the tonic as she may?

Mrs. Pinto's lips continue to smile, she blows kisses from her finger-tips, alternately to Mufti and to her husband, until the train gets well in motion. The moment they

shoot forth from the Nice station into darkness, she throws herself back, with an ominous jerk and rustle, folds her braceleted arms across her chest, and pouts. Roger Tryan, also, leans back in his corner; he gazes, with the expression of a man whose thoughts are elsewhere occupied, at the lamp in the center of the carriage.

Things go on in this pseudo-tranquil fashion until they are about midway between the little stations of Villefranche and Beaulieu. Then, like the sudden upleaping flame of an olive-wood fire, does Nessie Pinto's temper burst forth. She gathers herself, morally and physically, together; she bends over toward her companion, the hard, coarsely cut lips a-quiver, the mean brow lowering.

"That might have been an awkward meeting with the Dormers on the Promenade des Anglais to-day, might it not? Brought me back, rather, to the old times at Langen Waldstein when Lady Joan Majendie—"

Roger Tryan interrupts her with a quick expostulating whisper.

"Pray be guarded, Mrs. Pinto! Remember how a name travels. Remember that there are other persons in the carriage besides ourselves."

"Stuff and nonsense!" rejoins Nessie, in the sincerity of her ill-humor abandoning foreign affectation for familiar vernacular. "As if a trio of dowdy Italians could matter to me."

Filippo Filippi is whispering pretty things in liquid lingua Toscana about the blueness of the night and of the signorina's eyes—pretty things, to which Joyce, feverish and pre-absorbed, gives scanty heed.

"I am not in the least ashamed of anything I do or say," proceeds Nessie. "Although you, yes, *you*, Mr. Tryan," she passes a bit of embroidered cambric, with a furtive attempt at pathos, across her eyelashes, "are so mortally ashamed of me."

"Ashamed?" repeats Roger gently. "If you meant this in earnest, it would be equivalent to telling me that I am the most ungrateful fellow living. What should I be, at this moment, but for your kindness, your friendship?"

Very much better off than he is, socially and financially, could the mists only clear from before Roger Tryan's eyes, and enable him to see the truth!

“Whose hand but yours was held bravely forth to me at a time when fortune was blindest?”

Ah, the pang in Joyce's miserable heart!

“What possible cause can I have for feeling ashamed of such old and tried friends as yourself, and—” the conclusion of the sentence does not flow with perfect readiness from Tryan's lips, “and Pinto?”

Nessie breaks forth with increasing bitterness: “I am not talking about Pinto at all. I am talking of myself, only. Can you look me in the face, Mr. Tryan, and declare, on your word of honor, that you felt no shame—you were not embarrassed—when we came across that Dormer girl and her mother this morning? I have had no opportunity of asking you the question sooner.”

Roger Tryan is silent.

“The ladies vouchsafed no recognition of their old friend,” pursues Nessie scoffingly. “But I don't know whether the blame must be laid altogether at my door. What do you say?”

“I say,” replies Tryan, warming, “that there is one subject—just one in the world—upon which we shall do wisely to agree to differ. There is one name—”

She interrupts him with stinging emphasis:

“One name which Mr. Roger Tryan will not hear profaned by such an one as Nessie Pinto! And there is one pale-faced, cold-eyed girl whom Roger Tryan can not meet, even now, two long years after she jilted him, with the common, honest, self-respect of a man. How did I know them on the Promenade to-day? What instinct could have told me that those two atrociously dressed women were Mrs. and Miss Dormer, if your face had not betrayed you?”

Roger Tryan attempts a tone of banter, not too successfully.

“Ladies are quick at this sort of divination. The man of science can build up a megatherium from a single bone. A woman can evolve a character, a scene, a drama out of a bonnet-ribbon! Some detail in the ‘atrocious dress’ might have helped you to a theory, Mrs. Pinto, even if the Nice arrival list had not put you in possession of a fact.”

“I am not at all in a humor for joking,” cries Nessie, uncertain in her inmost soul as to whether Tryan laughs with, or at her. “And if I *had* read the names in the Arrival List, the subject concerned me too little to give it

a second thought." This is the exact style of Nessie Pinto's syntax. "Take it which way you like, you were embarrassed, Mr. Tryan, just as you always are embarrassed when any of your old set come across you in my society."

"Don't you think it is ungenerous—late, somewhat, in the day for you to make these reproaches?"

"I do not. I think the want of generosity is yours; and I mean, as regards the Dormers, to know what ground I stand upon. The next time we meet those people in a public place, it may be Miss Joyce Dormer's whim to recognize you. Am I to walk discreetly on with Mufti, or what?"

Prompt, decisive, comes Roger Tryan's answer:

"I am afraid, Mrs. Pinto, the contingency is too remote to calculate upon."

"Afraid?"

"Certain, then, if you prefer the word. You remember what Thackeray wrote about engaged young ladies in the 'Newcomes'?—'They ought, like the pictures in the exhibition, to have little green labels pinned on their backs with "Sold" written on them. "It would prevent further troubling and haggling," said Ethel. "And then at the end of the season the owners could carry us home." The little green label, from what I hear, should be somewhere visible on Miss Dormer, and, next Easter, the owner," adds Roger Tryan with a certain change of voice, "is to carry her home from Italy."

"If Mr. Farintyre remains constant, as Miss Joyce Dormer's suitors have not always done," says Nessie bitterly. "All these speculations, remember, however interesting in themselves, are no answer to my question. If we meet Mrs. and Miss Dormer again in the public walks, if this chit of a girl sees fit to recognize you—"

But Nessie Pinto stops short; stops, with Tryan's face, white as marble, confronting her, with his grasp laid suddenly, heavily upon her wrist.

"Speak Miss Dormer's name with respect, if you must speak it at all!"

Though the strength of passion is in Roger's voice, it has sunk to a whisper. Only the morbidly strained condition of Joyce's senses enables her to catch his meaning clearly.

"I do not wish to quarrel with you, Mrs. Pinto. You

should know that pretty well by this time. But, by ———, if you mention Miss Dormer before me you must see that the terms in which you speak of her are fitting!”

In this moment, Nessie Pinto, we may well believe, undergoes a worse sensation than that of common fear. Outwardly she does not flinch. A woman who has passed a dozen years at the side of Major Pinto must, by hard training, have gained—not heroic courage, perhaps, but a tough physical callousness, tolerably well calculated to take its place.

She even brings out a discordant, short stage-laugh.

“Excuse my levity, Mr. Tryan! The tallest Adelphi tragedy never does more than set my teeth on edge. In the days that are no more I don’t know that you always wanted me to weigh my words in speaking of this very sacred subject?”

Tryan does not answer.

“And I insist—as I have a right to do—upon your replying to my question. If, as fate has thrown us all together, here in Nice, you should meet Miss Dormer when you are in my society—”

“If I should meet Miss Dormer, in any place, or in any society, I should wait—have I not waited for more than two years—hoping it might be *her whim* to recognize me. You know, or ought to know this pretty well already, Mrs. Pinto.”

And, having thus spoken, Roger Tryan loosens his hold curtly on Nessie’s wrist. Then turning away, he leans his face toward the open window, through which the electric lights of Monte Carlo begin to whiten.

“Mr. Roger Tryan would wait hoping it might be Joyce Dormer’s whim to recognize him,” repeats Nessie, with sullen, slow precision. “And I—might walk on with Mufti! Exactly. It is always well that a delicate matter of this kind should be settled beforehand. I—might walk on with Mufti! We understand each other to a nicety.”

And, after this, not another word is spoken in the railway carriage until the train stops at Monte Carlo.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BETWEEN THE LINES.

“*Faites le jeu. Messieurs. Le jeu est fait. L’or va au rouleau. Tout va aux billets. Tout va à la masse. Rien ne va plus.*”

Half blinded by excess of glare after the soft outside darkness, Joyce Dormer finds herself listening to the croupier’s cries; a sad-hearted unit among the crowd of human creatures who press around the roulette-tables in the first gambling salle of Monte Carlo.

What a crowd it is! Representatives of every class, of every nation in Europe, abjuring each other, it may be, in the spirit, but jostled together in the flesh until they form a mosaic than which not even the congregation in St. Peter’s at Easter can be more bizarre.

A douce old Dorsetshire dean, straight-coated, clerical-hatted, in close juxtaposition with M. Zola’s last type of Parisian lioness. Sallow-cheeked, sunken-eyed prodigals, *decavés* in the fullest sense of that untranslated term, side by side with English girls, fresh in their teens. Hard-working thieves of business, who filch their substance straight out of other men’s pockets, together with those of a more delicate fiber—thieves who pick up such orphan stakes as careless players leave unprotected on the table, “the brotherhood,” according to Monte Carlo parlance, “of St. Vincent of Paul.” Professional women gamblers, chiefly Teutonic, chiefly old, the last with faces that might serve as models to any new illustrator of Dante’s “Inferno;” needy wretches, many of them, content to play their six or eight hours a day, if, at the close, they be as many francs to the good. Young men hopeful of mien, who intend to put on their one napoleon, and fly if they lose. A sprinkling of imperial Tartars; a well-known Irish countess; an Irish countess’s husband. Jews from Genoa; hectic individuals from Mentone; Plymouth Brethren distributing polyglot tracts; a New World authoress making notes for copy. Lastly, be-diamonded, in paste, out of all reason, her bracelets clanking, her lips clothed in their

falsest smiles, her black eyes alert, on the watch for the fall of cards, or of fortunes—Nessie Pinto.

Clearly distinct among a sisterhood where paste brilliants, false smiles, and clanking bracelets are the rule, Joyce Dormer sees this woman ere the first doorway is passed. Drawn by the queer magnetism which impels human beings toward the very thing which they would most shun, the girl approaches near enough, her hand rigidly clasped upon her mother's arm, to catch the tones of Nessie's ringing voice and harsh strident laugh.

The evening is progressing, for Mrs. and Miss Dormer with their poet have lingered in the delicious freshness of the gardens. But Nessie Pinto stands, as yet, an idle spectator, beside one of the roulette-tables. Roger Tryan, in the second *salle*, is trying his fortunes at trente-et-quarante; and Nessie, for her attendant, has Sir Dyse Tottenham, that irresistible red-tape knight of sixty, whose buttoned Bond Street coat, Prince Regent wig, purple face, and short portly figure are just as well known within the precincts of Monte Carlo as the croupiers or the chandeliers.

A wily player at life's game, as on this mimic battle-field of green baize, is Sir Dyse, an Achilles, vulnerable, financially, at one point only, as Nessie Pinto right well knows—the point of vanity.

“Terrible things are whispered about your goings-on last night,” she tells him reproachfully. “After I left, you banked, in spite of all my warnings, with little Mrs. Scrope”—little Mrs. Scrope is the prettiest woman between Marseilles and Florence—“and dropped your money royally. Now, if you would only throw in for another *coup*, put yourself, for once, under my safe wing, I should take so much better care of you than Mrs. Scrope!”

Nessie glances, as she pleads, into the withered face at her side; and a pleading glance of Nessie's handsome eyes is, when she chooses, something worth encountering. But Sir Dyse melts not; he remarks with guarded gallantry, that he would shrink from implicating any one so charming and so ingenuous as Mrs. Pinto, in his ill-luck.

“If every one felt as I do, the term ‘ill-luck’ would go out of use,” cries Nessie Pinto, briskly. “Luck, however bad, must sooner or later change, and sensitively organized natures have an instinct for divining *when*. In that lies all

the secret. I feel, though I could not reason about it, that I shall get on a run to-night."

"A pity, if you are in the vein, that Major Pinto is not here to reap the benefit of the inspiration."

And Sir Dyse is sensible of a fluttering sensation, not so much in his heart, as in the left breast-pocket where he carries his purse.

"Oh, Pinto was dining out." Have I not hinted that poetic license at all times comes easier than prose to Major Pinto's wife? "We are in such an immense circle at Nice—it is only by dividing we can get through our engagements at all. Yes, Pinto was dining out; and Roger Tryan"—how his name, spoken as Nessie Pinto speaks it, jars on Joyce's ear!—"Roger Tryan was kind enough to escort me here."

Sir Dyse makes her an old-fashioned little bow.

"Mr. Roger Tryan is hugely to be congratulated on his good fortune!"

"I wish I could agree with you," says Nessie, shaking her head. "Pinto and I consider Mr. Roger Tryan quite the most persistent loser we know. The fact is, you see, poor fellow, he has no beliefs. I am as broad as most people, still, one must have some dogmatic weaknesses."

"Even at the gambling-tables of Monte Carlo?" chuckles Sir Dyse Tottenham.

"More here than elsewhere. You see this mysterious amulet I wear in my bracelet? It is a morsel of De Morigny's rope—the wretched little Frenchman," says Nessie, with the contempt minds of a certain order feel toward failure, "who hanged himself the other day. (And I know it to be authentic! A good many forgeries are current, but Pinto *was on the spot at once.*) Well, whenever I wear my bracelet I am certain to win at roulette—though, of course, I would not tempt fate by wearing it too often."

"Your principles, madame, are above praise."

"At superstition I draw the line. No Aberglaube; no fetichism for me." Nessie inclines much toward airing words she does not rightly understand. "I call it blind credulity, do not you, to back one number because you got it in exchange for your umbrella, or another because it was on the fiacre that took you to the Nice station?"

"I think I should call it a dogmatic weakness, Mrs. Pinto."

"But I am above all that. My faiths are few but firm. This bracelet, I know, brings me luck at roulette, and so do certain among the croupiers at trente-et-quarante."

Old Sir Dyse looks amused, as Nessie intends that he should feel.

"And what," he asks, "is the difference between faith and Aberglaube?"

"Faith with me is experience," replies Mrs. Pinto gravely. "Nothing in creation would persuade me to stake at trente-et-quarante when that Russian fellow, Kriloff, deals. I consider little Paul Joseph the luckiest croupier of the Administration. You heard about the wonderful run last Saturday night? Rouge had made thirty-two, not a bad point, as you know; twenty-four had been dealt for noir, and then *seven* aces were laid down in succession, making noir the game with thirty-one. Well, I was backing noir, Sir Dyse," says Nessie, her eyes aflame with interest, "and little Paul Joseph, my good genius, was dealing. Imagine the feelings of the backers of rouge!"

At the conclusion of her narrative, Nessie moves nearer the roulette-table, whither the gallantry of the ancient red-tape knight leaves him no choice but to follow.

"Another of my beliefs is that you should invariably begin play with roulette," she whispers amidst the Adonis-like tendrils of his wig. "It rouses the faculties and clears the cobwebs from one's brain before settling to the serious work of trente-et-quarante. Shall we try our fortune together, Sir Dyse?—start off with a humble joint napoleon, and resolve, as Pinto says, not to let our passions run away with us?"

And Nessie's talisman, the shred of suicide's hemp, for a time would seem to work well.

The joint napoleon is staked; they win, stake, win again. A heap of gold begins to mount, well guarded by the lady's jeweled left hand. A cautious fire lights up her bistréd eyes; the hard lines around her lips grow harder. Iron will, cool nerve, indomitable patience—qualities that under other auspices might have made a great and a true woman—are to be deciphered in this ugly moment on Nessie Pinto's countenance.

"*Trent-cinq; noir impair et manque,*" cries the mo-

notonous croupier's voice. "*Trente-cinq; noir empair et passe. Trente-quatre; rouge pair et passe.*"

Mrs. Dormer clings shrinkingly to Filippo Filippi's arm. "The whole scene is sickeningly painful. Look straight at a face before us, Joyce; alas, at a face we know," for they have now approached the trente-et-quarante table where Roger Tryan, unconscious whose eyes are watching him, stakes his napoleons. "What mean, what apathetic despair one sees written there! It is no place for you, my darling."

"Mamma," answers the girl earnestly, "every place is a place for an artist, that which in the world I most aspire to be. If there had been a Monte Carlo in Schumann's days, what a dark-companion picture to his 'Butterflies' might have been left to the world! Schumann would have let you hear the rippling of the wind among the roses and orange boughs outside, the hoarse '*Rien ne va plus*' of the croupiers, the whispers of the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen—yes, and the groan of the wretch who has lost his last napoleon, and carries his pistol in his breast-pocket! Do you think me so light, so cold," pursued Joyce, with a flushing cheek, "that I am unkindled by the pain, the tragedy, to which all this gas-light and tinsel and gilding form the drop-scene?"

"I think," says Mrs. Dormer cleverly, yet with the practical ignorance of human nature which characterizes so many of these half-clever, half-worldly women—"I think that if a sensitive, well-nurtured English girl wished to be cured of an idle love fancy, she would look critically at her hero's face—I mean at the face of the man who was her hero once—when it is deformed by the meanest of all passions—gambling."

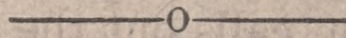
"And suppose that, in her eyes, it were not deformed?" exclaims Joyce. "Suppose she could read between the lines, could recognize, not apathy, not despair, but the weary discontent of a man too good for his surroundings?"

"I spoke of a girl possessing common sense; a girl determined to see that which she very well knows must exist."

Joyce Dormer turns sadly away.

Alas! she has looked only too critically at the face of him who was her hero once, and in the look has gone back to the whole sweet passionate romance of her life! Her first meeting with Roger at the opera, when "*Carmen, mia*

Carmen adorata" rang through her heart; the London balls, at which night after night, she used, through curiously persistent mischance, to lose her programme, and was reduced to telling Mr. Tryan, "he might decide as he liked about her dances;" the hour when, amidst slanting yellow sunshine and call of birds and sway of branches, their talk first wandered from half-jesting sentiment into the borderland of passion. She has gone back to it all, and knows that never, no, not even in the morning of their too brief courtship, did she love Roger Tryan more utterly than at this moment.



PART II.

CHAPTER I.

IN LUCK.

"Faites votre jeu. Messieurs, le jeu est fait."

Trente-et-quarante, as the readers of witty Carle des Perrieres know, stands first in the regard of men who solicit fortune, oftentimes who find ruin, by the shortest road.

At roulette, a modest speculator may put down his five-franc piece and, losing it, depart. At trente-et-quarante it is a rigorous law that the stake be gold. Roulette is the favorite game of the passing crowd—the larger number of the players, indeed, stand while they stake; the favorite game of ladies, of very young men, of Spaniards and Italians; a kind of lottery, abounding in frivolous excitement and surprise, but inferior, say competent judges, as regards the poignancy of its hopes and fears, to trente-et-quarante.

Has not M. Carle written of trente-et-quarante that it is the most perfect "*machine à émotion*" to which civilization, standing on the last steps of time, has reached?

About twenty players are seated around the table at which Roger Tryan, with the tired air of a man who is at heart no gambler, stakes his napoleons. The majority of these persons are absorbed in the immediate fall of the cards. A few, with hands clasped above their foreheads, are painfully studying mysterious sets of tablets that lie

beside them; greasy sibylline leaves, upon which pathetically long labyrinths of pen-pricks denote the supposed progress of the game's chances.

The green cloth is covered with rouleaux and Bank of France notes. Not a sound is to be heard but the rippling breeze among roses and orange boughs outside, and the unmoved mechanical voice of Paul Joseph, the dealer:

“Faites le jeu. Messieurs, le jeu est fait. L’or va aux rouleaux. Tout va aux billets. Tout va à la masse. Rien ne va plus.”

After this official *“Rien ne va plus,”* there comes a sufficiently long pause. Then, with stolid indifference, the dealer in succession calls out the two scores aloud:

“Huit. Quatre. Rouge gagne. Couleur perd.”

And down fall the rakes, drawing in rouleaux, napoleons, notes, with fine professional catholicity, to the winning table.

A pile of gold lies at Roger Tryan's side. The bystand-ing spectators begin to watch him narrowly. Some, even, of his fellow-players, glance toward his winnings with an approach at interest.

“You are in luck—little Paul Joseph is dealing,” whispers Mrs. Pinto across his shoulder. For Nessie, deserting Sir Dyse Tottenham and roulette, has made her way to the trente-et-quarante. “You are in luck, and I—am bankrupt. Dear, childish, old Sir Dyse insisted upon staking for me, and of course lost everything. I could only make my escape by promising to dance with him (not a waltz, I trust) at our pension ball to-night.”

“Take my place, Mrs. Pinto,” says Tryan, rising. “Take my place, and make free use of my gains. Nay,” as she enacts a show of very feeble remonstrance, “I will accept no denial. Cards delight me not at any time. I am less in the humor for them than usual to-night. You promised before we left Nice that I should be your banker. Profit by the good fortune—rare enough as you know—that has befallen me.”

But Nessie Pinto's gods, if gods she have, are unpropitious. The dealing of Paul Joseph, the wearing of her hempen amulet, the utilizing of Roger's winnings, avail her not.

The heap of gold melts away. More gold out of Mr. Tryan's pocket melts away. He produces notes, solid

Bank of France notes, at Mrs. Pinto's bidding. They vanish.

Joyce Dormer, a sad spectator of it all, in her young heart understanding but half she looks upon, feels her spirit sink.

"You were only too right, mother," she whispers, moving back from the table with a shudder. "Monte Carlo might yield inspiration to genius, never to me. My dream of outrivaling Schumann is over; I am ready to leave at once if—if—"

But here the poor girl's speech fails her for sudden terror. Stretching out her hand, as she believed, toward Mrs. Dormer, Joyce has rested it, with trembling pressure, on the arm of a stranger, a fiercely-mustachioed foreigner, brilliant to excess, as regards his waistcoat buttons and sleeve-links, and who returns her glance with a coarse, cynically familiar smile that turns her blood cold.

A branch of Austrian royalty is spending the winter for quasi-bronchial reasons at Mentone. The branch and suite, just one minute before this juncture, entered the Monte Carlo gambling-rooms, and in the spasmodic contagious movement of the crowd—gamblers and non-gamblers alike eager to gaze upon a not too noteworthy Bourbon profile—Joyce's mother and the poet have been swept away from her.

Far distant, and at each instant receding further, she sees the leonine white locks of Filippo Filippi, the topmost fluttering bow of ribbon in a Jane Austen hat. Near at hand, where protection is needed most, are over-brilliant complexions, bistré eyes, the croupiers' impassive faces, and (horribly worse than all) the stranger upon whose coat-sleeve her hand during the space of a few inadvertent seconds has rested.

That stranger is he who calls himself "Count" Zecca, the fighting Fitz-Gerald of the district, a table-d'hôte nobleman, whose taper fingers are celebrated for their throws with the dice, their artistic neatness in turning opportune kings at *écarté*. A duelist, whose shameless proficiency in his calling has become a by-word. A Frenchman, born in Mauritius, brought up in the Brazils—put upon oath, could Zecca give reliable evidence as to his own nationality? An adventurer—let us call things by their names—an adventurer, a suspected card-sharper, a bully; and withal a man

who, at Monte Carlo, holds his head aloft in the crowd! A man whose enmity few men and fewer women would be rash enough wantonly to court.

In respect of the next five or six minutes Joyce's vision, to this hour, remains confused. She knows that Count Zecca, with a look and tone that stopped her heart-beats, turned and spoke to her. She knows that, although the gas-lights began to dance wildly before her sight, she gave Count Zecca an answer in faultlessly grammatical French, and with a pointed brevity which caused his sallow cheeks to redden. She remembers catching Nessie Pinto's eyes fixed upon her, a look of cool triumph in their black depths; remembers hearing a stifled burst of Nessie Pinto's laughter, and then—

Then, Joyce's clear recollections are of an English arm making swift approach through the crowd; of a foreign count, waistcoat buttons, sleeve-links, and mustachios, sent forcibly into nothingness; of reassuring whispers from a well-beloved, familiar voice; of a struggle through the densely packed outer vestibule; finally, of standing in the cool, pure night alone, on the fairest terrace in Europe, with Roger Tryan!

CHAPTER II.

OUR PATHS LIE APART.

FOR a while they keep rigidly to commonplace. So many generations of artifice live in our fibers, that at any crisis of strong feeling modern men and women instinctively fall back upon the dulcet inanities, use language to hide, rather than set forth, their emotion.

"I recognized you, Miss Dormer," says Tryan at length, "just when you, unluckily, got divided from your party. Nothing harder, really, than for people to keep together in these crowded rooms."

"And the Frenchman at whose side I stood was a stranger—I hope you understand that," cries Joyce quickly. "I touched his arm with my hand, thinking mamma was still there, and he spoke to me. I am afraid my answer was too much seasoned with British pugnacity for French taste."

A blush, painful in its intenseness, overspreads Joyce Dormer's cheek.

“Do not trouble yourself on the score of pugnacity. If explanation is needed, Count Zecca can get it from me. He is a man accustomed to explanations.”

Roger Tryan speaks lightly, but with a different significance underlying his reply to anything of which Joyce Dormer dreams.

“What, was the Frenchman you put aside a friend of yours?” she exclaims. “Apologize to him, Mr. Tryan, pray, if you find that he was affronted by my brusqueness.”

“Count Zecca is—no, I can not boast that I have the honor of the count’s friendship! But depend upon it,” says Roger Tryan, “he will not take your rebuff too seriously! The hangers-on at Monte Carlo, men like Zecca and myself, are happily not overburdened with sensitive-ness, whatever our other failings may be.”

“Hangers-on! If you knew how I hate to hear you class yourself among such people!”

The words break from Joyce’s lips ere she can reflect upon the perilous extent to which she may be committed by them.

“Are you speaking in earnest, Miss Dormer? Do you still take interest enough—can you still be pained, in any way, by such a subject?”

At his tone her heart takes alarm. She remembers the thinness of the ice upon which both of them stand.

“It is late—I think, Mr. Tryan, the prudent thing would be to return—to search round the rooms for mamma.”

As she stammers this, she half withdraws her hand from Roger Tryan’s arm, then stops short. He bethinks him of her attitude, her face at the moment when he asked her, nearly three years ago, to be his wife!

“The prudent thing for you, or for her? Is Mrs. Dormer afraid to trust you for a short ten minutes out of her sight?”

“Mamma has never known the sensation of fear yet. Have you forgotten our characters so completely as to accuse either of us of want of courage?”

“Then I see nothing to hinder your walking with me to the end of this terrace; Mrs. Dormer has an escort—”

“Our dear old poet, Filippo Filippi—yes, my mother is in good hands.”

“And can not possibly leave the Casino without your

seeing her. Surely, Miss Dormer, you need not grudge me my ten or twelve minutes of unexpected good fortune," he goes on, pleadingly. "Do you not remember how, in our old London days, a hundred years ago, you used to declare that the dances we never reckoned on—not those lawfully set down in the programme—were the ones best worth dancing?"

"Unfortunately—I mean, one may have said many foolish things in one's youth—I mean, these are not our old London days of a hundred years ago—"

The sentiment which gives birth to these disjointed remarks is worthy of a Hannah More. Quite honestly Joyce essays to put on looks of wisdom, tones of indifference, a manner of chill and absolute repulsion. And Roger Tryan, scanning her face—a page, clear, transparent as ever to his perusal—is not repulsed. Taking the hand that the girl has already half withheld from him, Roger Tryan draws it firmly within his arm, then leads her away under shadow of the friendly palms and eucalyptus that overhang the terrace.

He is a man whose best chances of life are past and done with, forfeited, say his friends, by a quixotism that the world's approval has scantily indorsed! And Nessie Pinto, under the gas-lamps yonder, is making ducks and drakes of his money, as she, or Major Pinto, or others like unto them, may do with more of it to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow! And the woman he loves is lost. Joyce Dormer, bought at a price, will, he doubts not, in a couple more months, have pledged irrevocable faith and obedience before the altar to John Farintyre.

But these present ten minutes, this actual, tangible snatch of good, Roger Tryan resolves to make the most of. Arbitrary divisions and subdivisions of time do not exist, it is said, when men's brains are at tension point. Ten minutes! Why, the Parisian hashish-eater, walking one evening down the Passage of the Opera, judged, from his sensations, that the walk must have lasted two years. Who shall say that the ideal of a lifetime's happiness may not, under the influence of a more potent intoxication than hashish, be compressed into such a meeting as this?

"In the first place, let me have a long look at you, Miss Dormer. You have grown, I think," his eyes resting with loving scrutiny, on her fair, tall figure. "But your cheeks

are less dimpled, have a trifle less color in them than of old. Are you strong?"

At the remembered kindness of his look, his tone, Joyce Dormer's self-control all but gives away. A guilty, choking sensation rises in her throat.

"I am much too old to grow, Mr. Tryan. You forget my age, of course? I shall be twenty-one next April. As to looking thin—my mother and I spent last autumn in Switzerland, and I fancy we walked ourselves into good condition. Dimples, as often as not, you know, arise from want of exercise. I am as strong as any giant. I dare say I shall live to be a hundred."

And in confirmation of her giant's strength, Joyce breaks down with a sigh that is half a sob. She turns her face wearily aside.

"Twenty-one in April," repeats Roger Tryan, after a pause. "Yes, your birthday comes on the thirtieth, just in time for the first roses. Do you remember—"

"The birthday I was eighteen," she interrupts, "and your gift to me! Considering that my Stradivarius is in my hands every day—every hour, almost—of my life, I am not likely to forget it."

"How shamefully I teased you about your violin! If other trades failed, it was decided we should frequent fairs and race courses, if you remember, and when the performance was over you were to go round, wearing spangles and a velvet cap, and with a little tin mug for half-pence."

"I was young in those days, Mr. Tryan. One can jest with such a light conscience at eighteen!"

"But now you play, I am told, like an artist. Coming across old acquaintances, I hear of you sometimes, Miss Dormer, when—"

When the Pinto policy of isolation does not succeed in keeping him and the old acquaintance apart.

Joyce Dormer's heart turns to ice.

"No doubt these same acquaintances have enlightened you as to other matters besides my violin-playing?"

She asks the question with unreflecting eagerness, her face uplifted to his.

"Yes, I have been enlightened," Tryan answers gravely. "Once or twice I have thought of writing to Mrs. Dormer, of offering my good wishes and congratulations, but, somehow, each time my strength of mind failed me."

Although we have given up corresponding, there can be no crime in looking upon each other as friends still, Joyce—I would say, Miss Dormer?”

“Friends!”

She murmurs the word under her breath, and with an involuntary movement of the fingers that touch his arm.

“But our paths lie apart, do they not? So utterly apart, that for all chance of meeting, one of us might as well inhabit the Antipodes. Well, well, I suppose these things are written—no use to kick against the pricks. Some one who shall be nameless is a lucky fellow.”

This last remark comes out after a very full stop indeed, and with an obvious effort.

“Do you think any human being should be pronounced lucky till he dies?” cries Joyce, with a futile attempt at speaking playfully. “The pessimists, who call life a bad joke that does not signify, are in the right, depend upon it.”

“You did not think so always. Life, to both of us, seemed the reverse of a bad joke once,” observes Roger Tryan.

The meaning conveyed by his tone is unmistakable. Joyce knows that the hour of explanation for which she has so longed is at hand. Woman-like, her instinct is to escape from it by flight!

“I am afraid, Mr. Tryan, delightful though the night is, that I must ask you to take me back. This coming to Monte Carlo was altogether a whim of mine,” she adds. Could Roger Tryan but know in what wild hope that whim had birth! “It would be cruel to victimize my mother and Filippo any longer. Mamma wishes to return to Nice by the nine o’clock train. I really must look after her.”

“Mrs. Dormer will look after you. Do not be in any fear on that head. Joyce, my dear”—after this abrupt fashion does Mr. Tryan send conventional reserve to the winds—“is the last rumor about your affairs reliable? Is Mr. Farintyre to follow you to Rome, at Easter?”

Joyce’s answer is given with loyal promptness. But tears are in her voice; no effort of will can hinder her tongue from stammering.

“Rumor for once has spoken true. I am guided by my mother’s wishes—and Mr. Farintyre’s. My mother, of course, knows best—there is no particular good in long engagements, is there?”

But of this matter Roger Tryan refuses to be a judge. He remembers a time when he was engaged himself, far back in his youth. It was the brightest time of his life, and came to a close only too soon.

"If people are happy," observes Joyce profoundly, but growing more and more confused, "if people care a great deal for each other, I dare say it matters little whether they remain engaged or are married. The world is good to them either way."

"And when people 'care a great deal for each other' and the world separates them—what then?"

She turns from him in mute pain. The quiet of the night is profound; a quiet broken at long intervals by some swirl of wind among the palm branches, or the dull beat of the waveless Mediterranean far below.

"And when people care for each other and are condemned to live asunder—what then?"

Roger Tryan's voice sinks, as he repeats the question, to a whisper.

"Each had better lie at peace, cold and unknowing, in the grave," Joyce answers, with a burst of pent-up emotion. "I have felt *that* for a very long time past. Better find rest in one's youth before one has forgotten the taste of happiness, than labor along a desert road for thirty or forty years!"

As the words die on her lips they reach the extremity of the terrace; from this a flight of broad marble steps leads down, through moonless glooms of tulip, acacia, and eucalyptus-trees, to a lower stretch of garden. A minute's hesitation, a glance in the quarter whence Mrs. Dormer and Filippo may reasonably be looked for, and the lovers "who ever must love more" descend. A minute more, and they are as much alone as though a hundred leagues divided them from glare of gas and clink of gold, from rakes, rouleaux, croupiers' cries, and the hard black eyes, the mocking cynical laughter, of Nessie Pinto.

Moved by some quick instinct of shyness, Joyce Dormer frees herself from Tryan's arm, and walks a pace or two away. Then she turns, and holding her hands upon her heart to still its beating, looks at her former sweetheart with steadfast gaze.

He has aged over-early—aged more than their two years and a half of separation should warrant. This is all the

change that Joyce can discover in him. The features, the brow, are delicate, the expression is honestly open as in the days when Roger Tryan, "the most popular speculation of the season, the handsomest fellow about town," first took her girlish heart by storm. If, according to Mrs. Dormer's theory, the hue of the plant becomes attuned to that of its surroundings; if a man, amidst coarse associates, must perforce be in a state of moral decadence, the process of degeneration makes itself visible by no outward or visible sign in Roger Tryan. The poppy retains its surface whiteness. The man approaches our ruined cousins the Ascidians by steps as yet imperceptible.

"I have given up the wearing of lavender gloves, Miss Dormer; my coat savors not of Bond Street; a dark suspicion of poverty and Bohemianism hangs about my presence. You see I have the faculty, as in the days that are dead, of divining your thoughts."

Sweetest womanly pity, impossible for her to dissemble, steals into Joyce's manner.

"You are looking older than you ought to look, Roger." The familiar Christian name *will* force its way, unnoticed by them both. "Your temples are worn. As I watched you bending over the cards at that horrible gambling-table, it seemed to me that you are growing ever so little gray. Ah, Heaven," she adds piteously, "what life is this we lead, we nineteenth-century people, that we lose our youth before we rightly know what youth is!"

"I finished with youth two years and a half ago," says Tryan. "I shall be eight-and-twenty this spring. At eight-and-twenty a man should be wise, whether his hair happen to have turned gray or not. My birthday, if you recollect, comes close upon yours. 'Seven years! exactly the right difference between you two dear children,' Mrs. Dormer used to say, looking at us with fond maternal pride."

"Mr. Tryan, is this generous? At the point where you and I stand now, can good come to either of us by going back to happier, better days?"

"Happier—better," he repeats, with collected slowness. "If I believe you to be in earnest, not swayed by the light comedy of the moment, I should feel sorry that you used those words. For I love you! Oh, no need to turn your head away. Mrs. Dormer, Lady Joan Majendie herself,

might hear the confession. I love you so much that I would rather your future life was untroubled by regrets. Your happiest, best days—or you ought to think so—are to come. It was of your own free-will, remember, that you gave me up in my poverty.”

“Roger—”

“Just as it is of your own free-will that you are taking—well, that you are on the road to taking Farintyre in his riches. As well learn or unlearn sufficiently to make the best of him, my poor little friend, for your own sake.”

Upon this, Joyce's fortitude breaks down signally. She lifts her hands to her face; a big sob convulses her throat, and in another moment Roger Tryan's arms are around her.

“When I gave you up, when I was persuaded into writing to you as I did, I sinned.” She murmurs this with broken, indistinct utterance, her head clasped against his breast. “Yet I think if you had been patient only a little while longer, things might have come straight. I was penitent. I was waiting day by day for a chance of reconciliation when mamma received that crushing letter from Lady Joan Majendie. She had seen you at some German watering-place with congenial friends, in excellent spirits. And I knew that you had forgotten me.”

Absolutely, simply upright is Roger Tryan's answer.

“I have not forgotten you during one waking hour of my life. Wherever I have traveled, whatever my associates have been, your face, my darling, has been before me always. So it will continue to be, I hope—for to me there would be no gain in forgetting past happiness—till the end.”

“Yet you never wrote, you never gave me an opportunity of setting myself right in your eyes?”

“I looked upon my sentence as final. I knew that my judges had decided with wisdom not to be questioned,” says Roger Tryan.

“You are cruel; but I deserve it. I deserve more than you can say.”

Joyce clasps her hands together with a gesture half despair, half entreaty. As she makes this movement, the only adornment of her somber dress, a bunch of violets, tied with a loop of crimson filoselle, falls from her throat to the ground.

In a moment the violets are in Roger's possession; he lifts them, warm and odorous from their resting-place, to his lips.

"I will give them back, or some fresher ones, if you will accept them from me to-morrow. Miss Dormer, will you allow me to call upon you?"

"Yes, Mr. Tryan, I will allow you."

"There are one or two questions to which I should like a plain, straightforward answer. In the first place: is it altogether too late to move for a new trial? Do not talk to me of your mother's wishes or of Mr. Farintyre's. Are *you* definitely pledged as regards next Easter, or are you not?"

Low is his voice and well controlled, but the ring of passion is there. It vibrates through every fiber of Joyce's frame. And still—she vacillates! Her right of action, as the reader knows, is not forfeited, a loop-hole of freedom remains to her. "If either of us see fit to change between this and April," was the ultimatum delivered to John Farintyre at Clarens, "it shall not be counted as falsehood." And Roger Tryan, full of unchanged love, is at her side, pleads for her answer. Her breast swells wildly with hope; she has only to speak one word for that hope to become reality. And instead of speaking it she vacillates—as so many a woman has done when happiness, when life, depended upon a prompt Yes! She remembers her mother, Lady Joan Majendie, the world, and shrinks away.

"Do you ask me these questions in seriousness?" she falters with trembling, clammy lips. "You talk of moving for a new trial. Do the judgments of old days affect you still? You are leading a changed life, Mr. Tryan. You have new interests, new friends. Impossible that you can owe allegiance to them, yet care what fate awaits me."

"I owe allegiance to no one," says Tryan, without a second's hesitation. "Tell me you are bound in honor, and I withdraw. If I had a shadow—you hear me—a shadow of honest hope that I could win you back, I would follow you to the end of the earth to-morrow. Two years ago," he adds, "you threw me over, wisely, no doubt, all things considered, as the world holds. Yet sometimes I have thought that poverty, neglect, work, sweetened by such love as you and I felt for each other, might have been the better part."

Before the look of pain on his white face, Joyce's last frail barrier, pride, is swept away.

"What do I care for neglect—what do I ask but to work? I have been used to poverty always. I don't want to know the taste of money. If I could choose, I would sooner spend the rest of my days free of riches than possessing them."

"Joyce, is the power of choice yours still?"

And Tryan has taken firm possession of her hand; her hand is more than half-way upon the road already traveled by the bunch of violets, when Mrs. Dormer, clinging to the arm of Filippo Filippi, appears unexpectedly on the scene.

CHAPTER III.

COUNT ZECCA'S BOAST.

THE night, as I have hinted, is moonless, but the lamps, thickly stationed by a liberal administration along every *allée* and terrace, rendered the Monte Carlo gardens clear as day.

Watteau or Boucher might have loved to paint the scene upon which Mrs. Dormer, her maternal heart distraught (the mixed sensations of hope, dread, ruin, possible victory, all compressed into a moment), finds herself forced to look. A scene with a background of purple star-lighted sea, a middle distance of olive and cypress, a foreground of marble terrace, penciled fan palms, and orange-trees; item, two figures which, with eloquent grace, yield the needful touch of human interest to a perfect picture.

For a moment Mrs. Dormer stands still, not so much irresolute as beset by conflicting resolutions. Then after a discreet explanatory whisper in the poet's ear, she trips forward alone, a slender hand cordially extended, an admirably well-chosen smile upon her lips, toward Roger Tryan.

I have, before this, chronicled many flattering things of Joyce's mother; in common justice, two clauses horribly the reverse of flattering must be added. First, she never omits a chance of offering her hands to an enemy. Secondly, when she hates you most, she is, in all seasons and places, mistress of a smile.

"How do you *do*, Mr. Tryan? Just for one moment I did not remember your face. Two years, alas! work such

sad havoc in us all. These charming accidental encounters make one half believe in Destiny, and still I fear, it must be a case of how-do-you-do and good-bye. So fortunate, Joyce, love, that you should have met with an old acquaintance; fortunate, too, that you and Mr. Tryan recognized each other in that terrible crowd; now, do you know, we must run—yes, actually run—as fast as our dear Filippo can keep up with us, if we would catch the nine o'clock train."

And, while she prattles out this little string of accentuated nothings, Mrs. Dormer holds, ay, presses the hand of the man whose happiness her worldly ambition has ruined. She looks up at Roger Tryan with all her dimples brought into play, with her eyes shining softly under their long lashes.

"I am ready, mamma," says Joyce, in a heavy, tired voice. The sight of her mother's face, the sound of her mother's voice have borne the poor girl back from intoxication to soberness, from the joys of a faintly possible heaven to the actualities of this every-day world in which she and Mr. John Farintyre have so nearly agreed to "labor along a desert road," yokemates. "As our time is short, I suppose we must say good-night, Mr. Tryan." She gives her hand to her old lover, lapsing, mechanically, into the frozen phrases of mere acquaintanceship. "We are very glad, I am sure, to have come across you again."

"So *very* glad!" echoes Mrs. Dormer, whose speech and manner are more italicized than usual, "You are, I doubt not, making some stay in Nice? Yes. My daughter and myself will, I fear, be going on to Rome immediately. I have been talking about the Riviera climate and my own sleeplessness with Signor Filippi." Had ever woman so many convenient symptoms loyally within call as Mrs. Dormer? "And he thinks—Joyce, dearest, you hear—Filippo Filippi thinks, with me, that there is no place like Rome for calming overwrought nerves."

Roger Tryan keeps possession of Joyce's hand with valiant disregard of her mother's presence.

"No place like Rome for enabling one to forget one's self," he repeats. "Do you recollect what Hawthorne makes one of his heroines say, Miss Dormer? It was in some book we read together in Cowes, that August! 'I

believe that Rome, mere Rome, will crowd everything else out of my heart.' ”

“Heaven forbid!” cries Joyce, unconsciously using the exclamation of Hilda’s betrothed.

Mrs. Dormer is about to interpose, little approving this exchange of sentiment by quotation. Opportunely, however, Filippo Filippi draws near, looking—his slouched hat in his hand, his cloak drawn around him—like some old Florentine noble, newly alighted on earth from one of Titian’s canvases. Has Filippo in his poet-soul some fine affinity with the lovers, or does the prosaic thought of supper and sleep prompt him to suggest that the ladies must hasten if they would catch their train? Whatever his motive, he engages Mrs. Dormer’s attention, drawing her to the nearest lamp to consult the minute-hand of his watch, and Tryan is free to whisper a few eager words in Joyce’s ear.

“My question remains unanswered. Is the power of choice yours still?”

“Come to see us,” she falters, “and I will tell you.”

Tell him! As though the expression of her uplifted eyes were not doing so at this moment.

“At what hour to-morrow will you be at home to me?”

“I shall not leave the house all day. We live at the corner of the Jardin Public—”

“Overlooking the sea. I knew your house before you had been twelve hours in Nice. I have passed it, have looked up at a window I believed might be yours, pretty often during the last two or three evenings. You will see me in good time to-morrow; then, and —”

“My dear Joyce, *will* you have the kindness to make haste?” cries Mrs. Dormer, a ripple of cold displeasure in her voice. “If we miss this train, we shall be forced to return with the crowd an hour later. And of the crowd you and I have surely seen enough! Good-night to you, Mr. Tryan—*good-night*.”

And with a lingering hand-pressure, a long, last look, Roger Tryan and Joyce separate, to meet—so Mrs. Dormer in her heart of hearts decides—no more.

Almost the first face Tryan encounters on re-entering the vestibule of the building is that of Count Zecca, the Monte Carlo Fitz-Gerald.

Not a good face to contemplate at any time is Zecca's. At this moment he is livid to the very lips; the veins upon his low, ignoble forehead are swollen; a glare of revengeful fire is in his stealthy, blood-shot eyes.

An ungloved woman's hand, glittering to the knuckles with rings, rests on Zecca's arm. As Roger draws near, the strident tones of Nessie Pinto's voice enlighten him, against his will, as to the subject upon which the pair are conversing.

"*Insulty—oh, mong Jew!*"

Major Pinto's French, as I have said, is distinguished by more than common idiomatic fluency, although his style be such as a man must naturally acquire among billiard-sharks, book-makers, and stud-grooms. Nessie's is of the 'ighgate 'ill boarding-school, pure and undefiled. Like Chaucer's prioress, she speaks French, full fair and fetishly—

"After the scole of Stratford atte Bow,
For French of Paris is to her unknowe."

If Nessie have occasion to write a letter in this language, the poor old major, who never had a grammar lesson in his life, and who spells both English and French phonetically, is forced to execute the task for her.

"*Insulty—oh, mong Jew, Mossieu le Comte, il faut pardonner tout a les amoureux. Ally dong! La fille avec les yeux bleux, est une ancienne amour, vous savy. Des circonstances sentimentales—*"

"*Sentimentales? Pardi,*" growls the Frenchman, "*dites plutôt—*"

But at this point he encounters Roger Tryan's glance, and the sentence, happily, perhaps, for Count Zecca's personal and immediate well-being, remains a fragment.

The two men have not even a bowing acquaintance. It has grown to be a tacitly settled thing that Tryan's purse should be, as much as possible, at Major and Mrs. Pinto's disposal, that their traveling-plans should be his plans, their stopping-places his, their amusements his. Here Roger's weakness knows a limit. He has held himself coldly aloof from Major and Mrs. Pinto's associates; has kept clear of Captain Blackballs and Count Punters who frequent Monte Carlo, just as in the old days such gentlemen used to frequent Homburg and Baden-Baden; a miserable, heart-sickening fraternity, among whom Nessie and

Nessie's husband stand on the easiest terms of good-fellowship.

"Ah, Mr. Tryan, you have come back then? Well, I declare, I thought you had deserted me. My last napoleon was dropped—Mr. Tryan nowhere! And you know how particular Pinto is as to my going about in the rooms alone. I really had no choice but to accept the count's escort."

And Mrs. Pinto stops, still leaning on Zecca's arm. She looks back across her shoulder, her face wreathed, poor creature, in the sincerest smiles she has at command, toward Roger. A woman of worse heart but better breeding, finding herself in an analogous position to this of Nessie's, would know how to support it with grace, would say the right word, look the right look, notwithstanding warranted conviction that the man upon whose arm she leaned and the man whose name she spoke might stand to each other in the position of murderer and victim to-morrow. Nessie Pinto must explain, prevaricate, commit herself, court notoriety at each new change of her life's sorry kaleidoscope.

A dozen units, of varying nationalities, in the crowd, turn at her loud "Mr. Tryan." A dozen pairs of eyes scrutinize the flashy, overdressed Englishwoman curiously. They scrutinize the other factors in the group: Roger Tryan, with his fine and chivalrous face, his sweet and lofty courtesy of bearing; Zecca, with his arrogant air, flat skull, and coarsely animal cast of features; the two singularly contrasted men whom the flashy, overdressed Englishwoman has brought momentarily into juxtaposition.

"Yes, indeed. You were absent so shamefully long I quite gave you up as my chaperon," repeats Nessie. "What made the case more hopeless was—that I had watched your exit from the scene with Joyce Dormer!"

She pronounces the name archly, with set, premeditated clearness. She interprets right the effect that name produces on Roger Tryan's expression.

"And, of course, as there was a young lady in the case, I looked upon your desertion of the tables and *I*" (alas for our Anglo-Saxon, when Nessie makes one of her desperate clutches after a nominative!) "as final. '*Ou revienj tonjours à ses premiers amours.*' We most of us know the truth of that proverb! However, Count Zecca has promised to give me safe conduct back to Nice."

Roger Tryan bows; accepting his dismissal, as he swallows his disgust, in silence.

“But you must not forget,” she cries, her voice growing shriller as the distance widens between them, “that you are engaged to us afterward. ‘The visitors at the Pension Potpourri request the pleasure of Mr. Tryan’s company at eleven. Dancing.’ Till then, ta-ta!”

And with a succession of friendly nods and smiles, with a salutation airily wafted from her jeweled fingers, Nessie sweeps away; her companion directing a parting glance at Roger Tryan, of which more than one spectator in the crowd guesses the sinister import.

It is a boast of the Monte Carlo Fitz-Gerald that he has oftentimes sustained a scratch to honor, dispatched his challenge, made his traveling arrangements, and got his man neatly finished within the twelve hours. What are the chances that another name shall not be added to the list of the “neatly finished” before to-morrow’s sun be high in heaven!

“The heroic treatment has proved successful,” whispers Joyce, when they are about midway along their homeward road to Nice. “We did wisely to visit Monte Carlo, mother. Whatever pain one may have had to bear is past and done with. My heart feels lighter.”

“And with change of air and scene will recover its tone altogether,” Mrs. Dormer rejoins promptly. “We will start for Rome the day after to-morrow by an early train.”

CHAPTER IV.

FIBERS.

“To shorten a long story, you have made a bad night of it, Mrs. Pinto,” remarks the major moodily. “I don’t see what good is gained by beating about the bush in these matters.”

A solitary candle burns on madame’s untidy dressing-table; for Nessie, though she may stake her friend’s gold with a royal hand at trente-et-quarante, is a keen economist as regards her husband’s weekly bills in the Pension Potpourri. Monsieur, still in his big checked morning-suit, and with a glass of whisky and water beside him, sits with

folded arms before the hearth. Mufti, the lap-dog, in a ridiculous attitude of attention, his black locks tied from his forehead with shabby apple-green ribbons, rolls his eyes cunningly from master to mistress as though expectant of a scene.

The last touch of carmine has been applied to Nessie's cheeks, the last tint of bistre shaded round her eyes. She is appareled in a ball-dress, whose hue and freshness match Mufti's head-gear. Her bleached-gold hair descends in clouds to her eyebrows. Her short, thickset throat is encircled by brilliants—we will not say of what water. Redolent of essence is her handkerchief, suggestive of kalydors and cosmetics her whole presence. The ill-lighted room, the untidy dressing-table, the shadowed figure of Major Pinto, set off, while they harmonize with, the picture.

"Yes, a deuced bad thing you and your friend Sir Dyse have made of it." This he repeats as Nessie maintains discreet silence. "And a deuced bad thing I have been making of it for the last fortnight or more. Unless affairs look up pretty speedily, Mrs. Pinto, the best course you and I can take will be to pack our portmanteaus, persuade Roger Tryan, if we can, to do the same, and depart from Nice, *without* leaving P. P. C.'s upon our numerous admiring circle of acquaintance. You must understand?"

Quitting her dressing-table, Nessie Pinto walks across to the hearth, her silken train rustling so portentously that Mufti, with an air of humiliation, slinks away under his master's chair. She is diligently working a pair of six-and-three-quarter gloves upon a pair of seven-and-three-quarter hands, biding her time over obdurate thumbs and buttons, smoothing the wrinkles out of finger after finger, with the same slow patience that we have remarked as one of her characteristics at the gambling-table. A smile is round Mrs. Pinto's lips, an expression of amused triumph in her sunken dark eyes.

"Such a queer sort of thing happened to-night, Pinto, at the tables yonder."

She indicates the supposed locality of Monte Carlo with a sidelong gesture of her head.

"Queer sort of things generally do go on in gambling-rooms," says Pinto. "You and I, 'tis clear, do not come to much good there."

"I rather think we were two hundred pounds to the

good last winter—yes, and should have remained two hundred pounds to the good if— However, we need not hark back upon that old story to-night! You know Count Zecca—”

“Don’t you know that I know him?” growls Pinto, “scoundrel and blackleg that he is!”

“Not much worse than his friends, that I ever heard of.” Here Nessie may be right. Of what caliber are the gentlemen who call Count Zecca friend? “Whatever his sins may be,” she goes on, “he has one virtue—courage. You will allow so much. He may be a gambler—”

“I dispute it!” In truth, Major Pinto’s mood would seem to be one for disputing most things. “When Zecca goes to the club it is to carry away money. We all know that. He makes his first appearance at an hour when other men, flushed with wine, heated by gas, unnerved by losses, begin to play wildly, and stakes his money—with discretion. His best friend never paid Zecca the compliment of calling him a gambler.”

“He is not a coward—not a man whom another can insult with impunity,” persists Nessie.

“It all depends upon who the other is,” Pinto answers contemptuously. “Zecca has eaten as much dirt as most men, in his day.”

“He is not disposed to eat any on the present occasion. Roger Tryan, I must tell you, took it into his wise head to have a fracas with Count Zecca to-night, a dozen spectators looking on, and—”

She stops; the gay flow of her narrative cut short by the expression of her husband’s suddenly upraised face.

“A fracas before witnesses with Zecca!” exclaimed Pinto under his breath. “Roger Tryan must have lost his wits—such hare-brain wits as ever he possessed. A fracas with Zecca means—”

“A duel, or, let us hope, merely a challenge,” interrupts his wife with calmness. “Precisely. That, I fear, is the measure of the entanglement into which poor Roger Tryan has chosen to put his foot.”

Pinto looks at his wife intently. He strokes down his yellow beard with the manner of one rapidly scanning varied contingencies, and seeing no possibility of financial good to himself in any of them.

“Who is she?” he asks at length, in a compressed odd sort of voice.

Major Pinto evidently holds, with Yuba Bill, that “let a man be hell-bent or heaven-bent, somewhere in his tracks are a woman’s feet.”

“Who is she?” he repeats, after a minute’s dead silence. “Not—not Mrs. Pinto, I hope?”

“Not Mrs. Pinto,” cries Nessie, artlessly. “My dear old goose, are you so deliciously simple as to think Mr. Tryan would be led into any kind of trouble about poor, obscure, insignificant me? Miss Joyce Dormer, *mon cher*, the blue-eyed, lackadaisical love of Roger’s primrose days, was wandering about the room, and got divided—by accident, we may charitably suppose—from her mamma. Well, not, of course, knowing who she was, it happened that Count Zecca spoke to her.”

“Like the double-distilled cad that he is,” observes Major Pinto, only with more emphatic felicity of language than I have transcribed.

A wanderer from life’s better paths though this man be, he has fibers still of English manhood left in him—instincts pointing toward an honest lot than it has been given him personally to know.

“Oh, we are going to put on airs of virtue, are we?” cries Nessie, with warmth. “We are going to assert if a girl with a certain *genre*—and a *genre*, Miss Dormer undeniably has, although I do not admire it—”

“Of course you do not,” Pinto remarks. “You have far too good taste, my dear, to admire Roger Tryan’s former sweetheart!”

And Nessie’s husband laughs aloud: a harsh, bitter laugh, that causes Mufti to peer forth from his hiding-place, and scan with renewed eagerness the faces of his joint possessors.

“All this nonsense is beside the point. I maintain,” cries Nessie, waxing hotter, “that if any English girl, if any young and passably good-looking woman chooses to loiter about in the *salles de jeu* at Monte Carlo she must expect unflattering notice. Joyce Dormer was standing beside the trente-et-quarante table, and I was witness of the whole scene. She turned, we may good-naturedly assume, believing her mother was at her side, and addressed Count Zecca, if my own eyesight can be trusted, laid her

hand on his arm. He answered her, no doubt, in the kind of jesting tone ninety-nine men in every hundred would have used—Major Pinto excepted—and in a moment Roger Tryan, like a madman, rushed across the room, and sent the Frenchman flying.

Pinto brings his hand down upon the rickety table with a force that makes his tumbler ring again, and that elicits a short but sympathetic yelp from Mufti. The dog rolls a suspicious eye toward his mistress, as though to see how this outburst of feeling on her husband's part shall be received by her.

"Well done, Tryan! Sent the Frenchman flying, did he? And served the Frenchman exceedingly well right. 'Pon my soul," says Pinto, finishing his whisky and water at a draught, "I don't believe a man in Monte Carlo, save hare-brained Tryan, would have shown so much pluck. Now, the next question is, how will the Frenchman be likely to take it?"

With a quiet, determined effort, Nessie forces the six-and-three-quarter glove to button.

"Ah! There is a question that may concern all of us pretty intimately. You can keep a secret, Pinto, can't you," she adds playfully, "if I tell you one?"

Major Pinto answers by a nondescript connubial growl, savoring little of playfulness. He disclaims any desire of becoming Mrs. Pinto's confessor.

"Only just this once! I feel, really, that you *ought* to be told," says Nessie, rising to the higher plane of duty. "After Roger Tryan had performed the act of valor you so much admire, he left the scene in dutiful attendance upon the rescued damsel. I had done play by this time, or rather play had done with me, so Count Zecca and I had a talk together."

"Which must have been improving—to both parties!"

And Major Pinto stares gloomily before him at the fireless hearth.

"Indeed, it so happened that Count Zecca offered me his escort back to Nice. I do not care for the man," admits Nessie with frankness; "I do not care for his society. I knew, however, that if Mrs. Dormer and Miss Dormer once held out a flag of truce there was not much chance of my meeting Roger Tryan again. I also knew you would not like me to be going about alone, and so—"

But here the major breaks in roughly.

"I am a plain man, Nessie, my dear; I like a story plainly told. Roger Tryan and that scoundrel Zecca have fallen foul of each other—more's the pity for Roger Tryan. And Mrs. Pinto—Mrs. Pinto, evidently, used her powers, in vain, as peace-maker. That's about the time of day, I take it. Don't let us have ornamentation. Don't interrupt the charming moral of your tale by idle speculations as to what *I* like, on any subject."

Mrs. Pinto turns sharply aside; the muscles around her lips quiver. If aught of good be in poor, world-hardened Nessie, surely it betrays itself at this moment. In some recess of her heart, jealously guarded, lingers so much love for Major Pinto still, that she can wince under his sarcasms!

She answers him very low, bringing out each sentence with an effort.

"You like plain speaking, you say. So do I. Too late for Major and Mrs. Pinto to begin ornamenting their discourse. Count Zecca, as I told you, brought me back to Nice—by the merest chance we did not travel in the same carriage with Roger Tryan. He spoke of the unwarrantable rudeness that had been offered him, of the effect such an affront would have on his reputation."

"Zecca's reputation! Finish with it all, quickly, I say. Why do you hesitate?"

"Well—I fear," says Nessie, her face still averted from her husband, "that Zecca is not in a mood to sleep on his wrongs, real or fancied. I may be mistaken, but this is how his talk impressed me. I did my best to conciliate him; still, I am afraid he means to act with French promptness, that one of his friends will reach Roger Tryan's hotel almost before Roger Tryan can reach it himself."

Pinto starts up on the instant from his chair.

"If Tryan does the right thing, he will treat the friend in the same spirit as he did the principal. The days of dueling were over half a century ago. Tryan is known for his courage. No man would think the worse of him, or of any other English gentleman, for refusing to put his life in the power of bully."

"*Autre pays, autres mœurs,*" says Nessie, with her accent. "Frenchmen and Englishmen have different codes

of honor. If Roger Tryan never meant to stand by his action, I see no great bravery in committing it."

"There is the fear—that he will stand by it. Poor Roger has a moral squint, looks at everything from an angle. We know how he argued himself, before old Tryan's death, into believing madness a virtue! Who shall say he will not turn virtuous now, put himself at Zecca's mercy, perhaps, out of *delicacy*. Kind of high-flown bosh," says Major Pinto, ingenuously, "that I never can stand, at any price. However, I shall go to him at once. Right or wrong, sane or insane, I'll see Roger through with it."

He has made a movement in the direction of the door when Nessie's large, tightly gloved hand is laid upon his shoulder; is laid there with a weight of authority that Pinto knows and bows to.

As a man and a brother, in the qualities commonly called those "of the heart," a superficial judge might rate this broken-down, outlawed major higher than his wife. Intellectually, by virtue, mainly, of her cooler temperament, Nessie stands above him; at any hour of the twenty-four can, at least, take sober, not alcoholized views of motive and action. No trifling superiority, as Major Pinto, pretty often, has had practical reason to acknowledge.

Her want of passion, her iced sobriety of judgment, come to the fore now.

"If you follow the best piece of advice ever given you, Pinto, you will keep dark for awhile. What good can come of making a dangerous man like Zecca our enemy? If Roger Tryan chose to embroil himself in a quarrel for the sake of his fickle first love, this pale-eyed, baby-faced girl, Joyce Dormer, he is a Don Quixote. *That* he has been, always. No occasion for Major Pinto to turn Don Quixote too."

"Joyce Dormer is an uncommon pretty girl," the major observes, not over appositely. "And Mrs. Dormer is an uncommon pretty woman. Watched them both from the club windows yesterday—fellows all wanting to bet as to which was the mother and which the daughter, and—"

Nessie interrupts these reminiscences brusquely:

"Has it ever occurred to you—during the time that has passed since first we met Roger Tryan in Germany—has it ever occurred to you to reckon up the debtor and creditor

account between ourselves and him—I mean, roughly, of course?”

Her hold upon Pinto's arm tightens. She looks with keen meaning straight between his eyes.

“You are silent, yet I thought I made my meaning clear. Have you ever reckoned up the debtor and creditor account between ourselves and Roger Tryan?”

Major Pinto shifts uneasily from this too close contact with his wife's superior intelligence.

“You are as 'cute in everything to do with pewter as I am, Nessie. You know the figure of my debts to a shilling. Where's the use of being down on a fellow, like this? Your play at Monte Carlo was to have brought us up, you said, with a run—your unerring system, learned from that Russian fellow you thought so highly of last winter.”

“Thanks to my system, I won more than two hundred pounds, honestly, last winter,” cries Nessie, with spirit.

“Yes, and should have kept them, carried them away in my pocket for the payment of butchers and bakers, if Major Pinto, with all his science, had not lost double the amount at banco. If I had only had capital to go upon should we be beggars, living in the Pension Potpourri, associating with the people we do, at this moment?”

“I am not imaginative, my dear; I can't fancy Major and Mrs. Pinto in the possession of capital any more than I can see what all this idle talk about money has got to do with Tryan and Zecca.”

“Do you know, Major Pinto,” pursues Nessie, firmly, “that we are a good deal nearer ruin than usual—that our credit, even in this miserable boarding-house, is at its last gasp? Do you know that Roger Tryan could give us a final push in the wrong direction at any moment he chooses?”

“By looking up an old I O U or two unexpectedly? Never! Roger Tryan is not the man to be hard on his friends at a pinch.”

Major Pinto's tone, however, has significantly lessened in easy assurance. Such fibers of good as are in him assert themselves with less and less strength; Nessie follows up her advantage briskly.

“Roger Tryan, unadvised, might be as careless of his affairs as ever. How about Roger Tryan, married? Roger Tryan, with a clever, needy mamma-in-law to look into his

money interests and help him on with her advice? I look deeper beneath the veneer of things than you do, Pinto. I have an instinct of coming danger that is seldom wrong. Perhaps you have forgotten my dream in Newmarket the night before a certain Two-year-old sweepstakes—the money some people might have made if they had believed in Sir Reginald being scratched?”

Two or three vigorous though scarcely classic expletives betoken that Nessie's forewarnings are still fresh in Major Pinto's mind.

“I have the same kind of dreams now, only this time they are waking ones. Roger Tryan has already made his peace, is so far *lost to self-respect*,” says Nessie grandly, “as to have accepted terms from the Dormers. We know, or I know, what the next act in this little genteel comedy is likely to be. Ask your own common sense if he could be those women's friend and ours? Why, do you think if Roger Tryan were walking beside Joyce Dormer here, in Nice, that he would recognize Major and Mrs. Pinto in the street?”

“If he did not, it might be the luckiest thing that could happen for Major and Mrs. Pinto,” cries the major, with a wretched laugh. “If Roger Tryan would obligingly forget, not only my personal appearance, but the look of my name in writing, it might be about the best stroke of fortune that could happen to me.”

And, crossing over to the hearth, Major Pinto stations himself before the meager glass that surmounts the yet more meager mantel-shelf. He arranges the brooch in his gaudy French neck-cloth, arranges the set of his yellow English beard, then, irresolutely, edges his way toward a hat and great-coat that lie upon a neighboring chair.

“Do not forget that you are to figure at the Pension ‘At Home.’ Our cavaliers are few. The young ladies will expect you to put in an appearance before we reach the final cotillon.”

Beneath downcast lids, Mrs. Pinto's glance follows her husband's movements as she makes the suggestion.

“The young ladies may dance with each other.” And by the tone in which Major Pinto speaks, Nessie can guess pretty accurately at the tenor of his decisions. “I'm too old for dancing. I'm not feeling strong. The mistral tries my nerves. A man must be an athlete to trot out

three consecutive Miss Skeltons to waltz time, and career through a lancers or cotillon with their terrible mother as a finish! Besides, if all this you have been telling me is correct," he shrinks from looking in his wife's face; he moves warily toward the door—"if Tryan has really been absurd enough to get himself into a scrape, I had best, as you say, keep clear of it all until things settle down."

"Nothing can be simpler. I can easily make some excuse to Roger for your non-appearance at the dance, and—"

"If I keep away it is more out of regard for Roger Tryan than myself. Understand that, Nessie. I am a man of the world. I don't want either Tryan or myself to be laughed at. How could I back my friend up in any mad-cap meeting with a cad like Zecca? Of course, if the poor fellow called upon me," says Major Pinto in a moved voice, "I should not refuse to act as his adviser. But it would go against my conscience. It would not square in with my notions of right to make myself a party in any way to such folly."

"The feeling is praiseworthy. Your sentiments do you the highest credit, my dear," says Nessie, accustomed to play dutiful prime-minister when Major Pinto's tardy scruples assert themselves, after an imperial fashion. "Unfortunately, it is not permitted, in this wicked world, for all of us to enjoy the luxury of an elastic conscience. Major Pinto, for his friend's sake, will show the better part of valor, and Mrs. Pinto and Mufti must face things as they come! Nail our colors to the mast, and stick by them, eh, Mufti?"

The dog has leaped up at the sight of Pinto's hat. He licks his master's hand in token of farewell; he listens wistfully as long as Pinto's heavy step can be heard descending the pension stairs. Then, with true hang-dog mien, with never an attempt at a caress, Mufti slinks to his mistress's side, sits obediently upright on his hind-legs while Nessie adjusts his silver chain, gives the last finishing touch to his green satin ribbons; and finally slinks down to the ball-room at her heels.

In past, comparatively honorable days, Mufti, as we have seen, was the chief in a band of performing dogs, the property of a traveling Italian showman, who afterward, under the pressure of evil fortune, sold him to Major and Mrs. Pinto. Poor Mufti used to play his rubber, fire pistols, lie

dead, yes, and on state occasions, fold his arms and enact Napoleon Bonaparte at Elba. Who shall say that his dog soul is a sheet of blanker paper than the soul of many a biped in broadcloth—that his sense of present humiliation is not sharpened by memories of a better lot!

“O mighty Cæsar, dost thou lie so low—
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure?”

CHAPTER V.

PENSION POTPOURRI “AT HOME.”

SOME slight additional burning of colza oil; some dozen Chinese lamps, precariously suspended amidst paper roses across door-ways; a couple of itinerant fiddlers; white cotton gloves for the dingy fingers of Francois and Pierre, and the cheap “At Home” of a cheap Anglo-French pension is organized.

Mrs. Skelton, in trailing black velvet—cotton-backed—a wreath of flowers in her cap, the fleshless cheeks high rouged, the warranted smile called into fullest play, “receives;” Nessie Pinto, gorgeous in the apple-green satin to which poor Mufti’s neck-ribbons correspond, acting as aide-camp.

The pension, well named Potpourri, is a dreary, barrack-like building, that stands a mile or more outside the Nice octroi. It is tenanted by such waifs and strays of the invalid Riviera world as are content to accept cross-roads, scorpions, brigands, doubtful mutton, and still more doubtful society, as a set-off to cheapness.

“The Pension Potpourri,” says Badeker, in small italics, “is under British superintendence.” Unwary travelers, to their cost, find the assertion true. For the Pension Potpourri is under the superintendence of Mrs. Skelton. The veteran rules the court, the camp, the grove. By dint of bribes to Francois and Pierre, the two overworked waiters of the house, she gets her daughters sandwiched in between the more eligible of the bachelors at the dinner-table. Her lynx-eyes inspect, if rumor whisper true, her wiry fingers tamper, with the whole correspondence of the house. Her snake-like movements, her noiseless tread, pink ribbons, and scarlet shawl infest every floor, every

staircase. She haunts the very bureau; keeps score of breakages and characters alike; and scans, not only the visitors' cards, but the weekly bills of her fellow-lodgers with the punctuality of a detective.

Only when purse-strings have to be drawn does the Skelton family shrink to the rear.

"Let us, ladies, *please*, have nothing to do with financial matters." So the veteran will plead when the Pot-pourri pensioners, at her own instigation, talk of giving a ball or getting up theatricals. "We should be sure to launch into foolish little extravagances did we interfere. Let the gentlemen, with their fine business heads, settle francs and centimes among themselves, and look upon us poor, helpless, unmathematical creatures in the light of ciphers." By which gentle strategy the gentlemen, whatever the condition of their lungs or their finances, find themselves forced into liberality, while the poor, helpless unmathematical creatures are exonerated from subscription.

Mrs. Skelton, with Nessie as aid-de-camp, "receives" such motley assemblages of guests as a pension of a certain class within easy reach of Monte Carlo is likely to gather together. Husbandless wives, the specialty of the region; husband-seeking spinsters, of perfectly safe and certain age; foreign nobles, the main credential of whose nobility is the bit of ribbon at their button-hole; a batch of circular tourists; hectic *poitrinaires*, who, upheld by the stalwart arms of the Misses Skelton, may take a round and a half of the polka, but shake their heads at a waltz; some possible widowers; some shabby-genteel indigenous English; an asthmatic West Indian planter; a dancing chaplain or two; and Sir Dyse Tottenham. Sir Dyse, persuaded by Nessie's eloquence to return early from Monte Carlo, and whose arrival causes a sensation, so rare is a British title, even the title of an ancient red-tape knight, in the Pension Pot-pourri.

Behold the veteran flutter, wriggle, circle around Sir Dyse on his entrance, like a little old bantam bound with in the magic of a chalk ring! Behold the pathetic importunity with which she puts forth Miss Skelton after Miss Skelton for his approval!

"Dian, my love—Dian, you are not engaged, of course, for the next lancers. Sir Dyse Tottenham, will you allow

me to introduce my second girl? I don't know, Sir Dyse Tottenham, whether you admire the Greek dress?" Pallid, unkempt, Miss Diana Skelton is doing her best to-night to resemble an antique statue. "It has been thought in artistic circles that the chiton somewhat becomes Diana's cast of features. "Pansy, my dear, I have the pleasure of introducing you to Sir Dyse Tottenham"—the eyeglass of that venerable Adonis having dropped discouragingly quickly, after an inspection of poor Diana's bony charms. "Pansy is our home-bird, an English fireside her ideal of earthly happiness. You are familiar, no doubt, Sir Dyse Tottenham, with Auchester? Alas, in brighter, better days!" Mrs. Skelton dusts an imaginary weakness from a stuccoed cheek. "The lamented prebendary—a pillar of the cathedral—all the best church and county society, and—and here is my little Aurora!"—old Sir Dyse, after his introduction to the two elder sisters, showing unmistakable signs of flight. "Aurora, our youngest, the Benjamin of the brood. But for this sad traveling, and the idle ways it gets us into, Aurora would be in the school-room still."

And she pursues the same strain—Sir Dyse having taken quick shelter under Nessie's wing—with dancing chaplains, shabby-genteel residents, red-ribboned nobles, and possible widowers. Without haste, without rest, the frank allurements, as the Gallican expression hath it, of the three Misses Skelton are set forth by their vigilant mother for the benefit of the crowd.

But Nessie Pinto bears away the laurels of the evening. Nessie is entertaining, posted in the last turf news from England, the last hazardous novelty of the Porte St. Martin, familiar with Monte Carlo gossip, broken in, I had almost said as a matter of daily duty, to the amusing of listeners too bored, too jaded, to search for subjects of interest themselves. Nessie is entertaining. Looking at her from a favorable point of view, forgetting that the apple-green satin, Mufti's ribbons, and all, might be fresher, charitably ignoring the part played by art in the working-up of the picture, Nessie comes within the category of pretty women; a category from which Mrs. Skelton's girls, despite all frantic efforts at picturesque quaintness, are forever excluded.

"Charming, very charming, to see such exuberance of spirits, and yet one wishes there were more ballast; one re-

grets that poor Mrs. Pinto has never known the responsibilities of a mother.” The veteran whispers this behind her fan, as Nessie, with Sir Dyse for a partner, prepares to lead off in the lancers. “We are everything that is kind to her. Living under the same roof, would sisterly forbearance allow one to be otherwise? But I think it right to say—I should be glad, my dear madame, if you would repeat the fact to others—that I permit no intimacy whatever with my innocent children. When Mrs. Pinto joins the lawn-tennis playing I consider it my duty to be present. When Major Pinto gives one of his whist-parties—and, alas! there is a class amongst whom whist means whisky—we retire to our bedrooms. On a wet Sunday when we are all obliged to go to church together in the pension omnibus, I try, if possible, to give the conversation *a tone*. At the age of my girls, and with their ignorance of the world, one can not be too much on one’s guard.”

Nessie, meanwhile, is dancing her lancers as gayly as though debt, bankruptcy—ay, and darker things than either—did not stare Major Pinto and herself in the face. Retiring, when the dance is over, to an improvised Eden of paper roses, pink calico, and lamp-oil, outside one of the windows, Nessie regales Sir Dyse Tottenham’s intellectual palate with refreshment suited to the place and hour; light, little, made dishes, for the most part, wherein the remains of all her very dear pension friends are served up, hot and highly seasoned.

“Yonder diminutive, bowing, north-country man and his wife—you see her? the lady clad in bridal silk, with muscular wrists and a forehead—are a certain newly married Mr. and Mrs. Peter Magrath, our musical genius and our bore. The bride practices her scales in the public salon, four hours a day. The husband gives us stale republicanism from the ‘Aberdeen Intelligencer,’ and discourses about the music of the future. ‘What is wanted for gude singing,’ says little Magrath, ‘is na’ voice, it is na’ execution, it is na’ harmony. What is wanted is just that which ye hear in my Gerty—sowl!’ The short-haired blonde, in an attitude and a sea-green turban, is a quasi-widow. A delicate constitution and the care of her venerable mother keep her in Europe—within easy reach of Monte Carlo—while her husband, poor fellow, is serving with his ship in China. If my husband were forced to broil

under a tropical sun for his country's sake," cries Nessie, with one of the little sentimental bursts which, even to herself, seem sincere, "I would contrive to be somewhere nearer him than the Pension Potpourri in Nice."

"Happy husband!" murmurs Sir Dyse, as he gazes admiringly at the rice-powder on his companion's cheek.

"But whatever we think—whatever severe things a sense of duty may force us to say of each other—we are of course very excellent friends on the outside. You can imagine," says Mrs. Pinto, with the easy cynicism that stamps the woman as surely as do her bistre and her rice-powder—"you can imagine to what extent a dozen ladies living for months under the same roof must love each other."

"You are too conspicuous, all of you, for generosity toward your own sex," answers Sir Dyse Tottenham, "whatever cruelty you may display toward ours."

"Yes, we give no little Italian stabs in the dark," cries Nessie dramatically. "We stoop to no paltry espionage. We are truthful and just in all our dealings. We extenuate when we can. We set down naught in malice. I wonder if Mrs. Skelton, our veteran, has introduced the Three Graces, her daughters, to Sir Dyse Tottenham's notice?"

"A delightful elderly lady, whose name I did not catch, introduced me to three delightful younger ladies," answers the old courtier, with prudent affability.

"To Pansy, the treasure of our hearth—our faithful, home-staying, stocking-knitting Pansy; to Dian, the loved of the Muses; to Aurora, our naughty, wild Aurora, who, in spite," says Nessie, "of her six-and-twenty years, well struck, ought to be in the nursery still."

"Mrs. Skelton and her daughters are evidently intimate friends of Mrs. Pinto's?"

Sir Dyse Tottenham asks the question with a chuckle.

"I am *as* slightly acquainted with the Skelton family as possible," returns Mrs. Pinto, lowering her eyelids. "Of course, living about in these kinds of places it would be absurd to give one's self airs, and indeed I rather pity the Skelton girls, poor things! They can no more help their terrible mother, than they can help their own want of breeding. All I trust is, we may never come across them in England. You can understand, I am sure, Sir Dyse, among one's own set, among Pinto's people in an English

county, it would not do, particularly as we belong to the Conservative interests, to renew such an acquaintance.”

Nessie is never more unintentionally diverting than in her moods of ambition, never more palpably out of her depth, and at the same time more volubly loquacious, than when she discourses about county exclusiveness, our set, Pinto's people, and the Conservative interests of England!

She is still seated under the Chinese lamps in the improvised pink calico Eden, when Roger Tryan makes his appearance on the scene. Sir Dyse Tottenham—with his portly figure, his purple face, and dapper little feet, looking exceedingly like a modernized satyr, in evening dress—whispers in her ear. Mufti at her side does chaperon, his black eyes rolling deprecatingly. “Separate me from my position,” those eyes seem mutely to plead. “A dog may be an honest dog, although muddled so deep in fortune's moat as to wear apple-green bows at a Pension Potpourri ‘At Home.’”

Nessie is seated thus, I say, flushed by a certain sense of triumph, laughing aloud over one of old Sir Dyse's least conventional narratives, when Tryan, a good deal past midnight, enters the ball-room.

Unnoticed himself, Roger stands still: for the space of several minutes he watches the woman whom, in all honor, with a fine and scrupulous fidelity, he has cherished as his friend. A light as of noonday has this evening broken upon him. He knows that during the past two years he has been dreaming a dream, and that he has awakened, and as he stands here, beholds the truth, sees Nessie Pinto as she is—not as his imagination may blindly have persisted in painting her. The low sweep of forehead, the mouth whose handsome lines turn to hardness when she laughs, the thickset throat, the seven-and-three-quarter hands forcibly compressed into six-and-three-quarter gloves, the belladonna and bismuth, the lap-dog and the apple-green ribbons—every detail of the picture stands out before him with sharp distinctness, in vividest contrast to the girl whose pure voice rings in his ear, whose bunch of violets (tied with the loop of crimson silk), lies hidden, sweet and fragrant, in his breast.

Well, reader, a great pang overcomes him. A sense, almost of personal loss, accompanies the illumination. He regrets his dream only, you must understand. The dream,

the chivalrous friendship, were his own. Nessie, until death them shall part, constitutes the happiness of Major Pinto. A dream, only— But men can not part from a dream, a chimera, lightly, as one throws away an old glove! And this chimera, for more than two years, has been quite the cheerfulest thing in Roger Tryan's life—has eaten and drunk, has walked and traveled with him, has taken kindly interest in his troubles and his joys, embroidered initials on his handkerchiefs, given him opinions as to morning-suits and neck-ties, adjusted flowers in his button-hole, and gradually alienated him from the more solvent classes of society.

A grasping, money-loving chimera, if very truth be told. But for two years Roger has believed in it. And he regrets not the poor, jeweled, painted reality under the paper roses yonder, but his own obstinately believed-in, forever-lost ideal.

“She that is kindest.” The burden of the song rings through his thoughts.

“She that is kindest, when Fortune is blindest,
She shall be first in the songs that we sing.”

If only that kindness, that loyalty, had come from a nobler heart than Nessie Pinto's!

CHAPTER VI.

SOME SCRAPS OF PAPER.

THE opening bars of a waltz, “Du und Du,” which the itinerant fiddlers have now begun, sound to Roger Tryan like a death-knell. The lamps, the tinsel roses beneath which Nessie and Sir Dyse are sitting, the jewels on Nessie's throat and wrists, look like the trappings of a charnel.

She sees him, and has the grace to change color beneath her rouge.

“Our guests arrive so shamefully late! Positively here is Mr. Tryan putting in a first appearance at this hour! As Mrs. Skelton is busy securing partners for the children, I suppose it is my duty to do hostess. You will excuse me, Sir Dyse?”

And, rising hurriedly, Nessie leaves her cavalier in soli-

tary occupation of the pink calico Eden. She advances with a smile, with a glove-imprisoned hand outheld, to receive Roger—the victim whom to-morrow's sun may see added to Count Zecca's "neatly finished" list. But the lights dance before her eyes; a choking sensation rises in her throat. Nessie Pinto is better than her own word. Though her colors be nailed to the mast, she is human, very human, at this moment.

"You do not deserve to be spoken to, Mr. Tryan."

When she is in ordinary good humor, it is her practice to call half the men of her acquaintance by their Christian names. Remorseful, unexpected stirrings of conscience restrain her from using the familiar "Roger" now.

And Tryan, with suspicion already awakened, notes the omission.

"The young ladies would never have forgiven you had you thrown us over. We are so alarmingly in want of dancing men, especially of dancing men with a due allowance of lungs."

Nessie's manner is sportive. She taps her fan with an air of jaunty self-possession upon the palm of her left hand. But Roger knows her well enough to detect that the voice is a tone higher than its natural key, that the over-rigid muscles round the mouth are kept steady by force of will alone.

He looks at her with an expression that Nessie, despite all her assumed coolness, finds it difficult to confront.

"I ought to have been here long ago, Mrs. Pinto; I returned from Monte Carlo, as you must have seen, in the same train with Count Zecca and yourself, hoping to reach the Pension Potpourri in respectable time."

"And you arrive here—in the small hours!"

"Yes. As I was on the point of leaving my hotel a visitor called on me. You can guess, can you not, on what errand?"

"I— How, in the name of Heaven, should I know anything about it? What concern can I have with Mr. Tryan's mysterious midnight visitors?"

And as Nessie asks this question a mirthless, ringing laugh escapes her lips. Is she to be unmasked openly? Will Roger accuse her to the face of the half-hearted part which she has played? Will he let men suspect, while yet lawful interference may be invoked, that Zecca, her friend,

seeks satisfaction for that unknown quantity which he is pleased to call his honor?

Mrs. Pinto feels her limbs grow suddenly weak. Thick heavy beads gather—white lead and rice-powder notwithstanding—on her forehead.

“What should you know, indeed?” echoes Roger, softening before her visible distress. “As you say, what concern can you have with my mysterious visitors, or their errands?” Then, as she stands, paralyzed, ignorant, in her great terror, as to how much he knows or means to reveal: “Have you no partner for this waltz that is going on?” he asks her lightly. “Is it possible that Mrs. Pinto ever stands out while others dance? Give it to me, then. Business connected with my midnight visitor will not allow me to stay here long,” Roger adds, with a smile. “I should be glad before we say good-night to have a last waltz together.”

“A last—say, rather, a first one.”

Nessie Pinto makes the remark under her breath, not lifting her eyes from the ground; then, resting her hand with an unsteadiness she is ashamed of upon Tryan's arm, floats away with him among the crowd of dancers.

She is as little given to sentiment as was ever one of Eve's family; has a quite prosaic and practical soul, poor Nessie! a soul alive to the hour's pain, the hour's enjoyment, persistently mindful of nothing save the cruelly fluctuating money-interests of Major and Mrs. Pinto. Yet, I think, through many a future hour the air of “Du und Du,” that last waltz ever waltzed with Roger Tryan, will be apt to haunt her memory over-pertinaciously.

“And so, Mrs. Pinto,” says Roger, when the music ceases, “we stand reconciled, with ‘Du and Du’ bearing witness to our reconciliation. You and I had something half like a quarrel, had we not, during our journey to Monte Carlo?”

“I felt wounded—I thought you had shown a disposition to-day to throw over old and tried friends for fickle ones,” is Nessie's answer.

But she falters as she makes it. She becomes suddenly interested in the workmanship on the handle of her fan.

“I must have shown a very black disposition, if that is true. To throw over a friend,” remarks Roger emphatically, “implies ingratitude—the one sin from which I have

hitherto believed myself free. However, we will not misunderstand each other in such an hour as this. I have never thrown *you* over, Mrs. Pinto, and you were the kindest, most unselfish friend in the world to me at a time long ago, when my need of friendship was sorest. We say good-bye to each other amicably, do we not?"

"Good-bye!" repeats Nessie, set adrift from all her moorings by his tone. "Why, what queer fancy has taken hold of you? You talk as if Pinto and I were not going to see you, as usual, to-morrow morning."

"Pinto—ah, that reminds me of something I was in danger of forgetting. Where is your husband?" Roger asks her. "Not at the club, I know. I called there to inquire on my way. Can you tell me, Mrs. Pinto, where I shall find him?"

Something in his look, in his cool, concentrated voice, throws the miserable woman altogether off her guard.

"Of course I don't know where Pinto is," she exclaims hysterically. "How can you, after all these years, ask me such a question? You are very strange to-night, Mr. Tryan, I must say. Why should Pinto suddenly begin to tell me about his comings and goings? You speak as if I had advised him—as if he had had some weighty reason for avoiding you."

As she utters this, her uncalled-for defense, her virtual self-accusation—utters it with stammering lips, with eyes guiltily downcast—every dark misgiving that Tryan, during the last three hours, has been forced to entertain, becomes a certainty.

He turns away; he shuns the pain of looking on her face.

"My seeing or not seeing your husband is unimportant," he remarks quietly. "I had a letter that I wished to give into Pinto's hands—"

"And that you will not trust into mine, I suppose?" interrupts Nessie, with a forced laugh.

They have by this time left the dancing-room; they stand together in a vestibule close beside the outer door of the house. The dreary consumption of Dead Sea apples that at such entertainments goes, inappositely, by the name of refreshments, is taking place just at present in the dingy dining-salon. And so it chances that they are alone. Roger Tryan takes a somewhat bulky letter from the breast-pocket of his coat, and reads the address aloud:

“Frederick Pinto, Esquire, Pension Potpourri, Nice.”

“When I wrote this,” he observes, “I had a strong conviction that Frederick Pinto himself would not be forthcoming. But Pinto need not have feared. Tell him so from me, Mrs. Pinto, when you give him his letter. He could have been present at your dance, could have wished me good-bye in safety. Your husband is the last man I would have seen mixed up with such a piece of folly. You will not forget?”

“I shall repeat the message as you bid me,” she stammers, “but really I am at a loss—”

“Neither you nor Pinto will be at a loss to-morrow,” says Roger Tryan. “Indeed, I think the major must know pretty well already how matters stand. Good-bye is a sorrowful word to be spoken between old acquaintances,” he adds, looking at her hand. “But time presses—time that I can scarcely call my own.”

And taking her half-unwilling hand, he wrings it—so heartily that the stitching of the overtight gloves gives way. At which catastrophe Roger Tryan laughs.

“Will you always persist in buying six-and-three-quarter gloves, Mrs. Pinto, or will some newer friend’s wisdom carry more weight with it than mine has done?”

“Some—newer friend’s—”

Nessie Pinto turns ashen as she realizes his meaning.

“Yes. There is a sequel to everything in life, is there not—a third volume to the novel, a last act to the play? However that may be,” says Roger warmly, “you can not prove yourself braver, cheerier, kinder, to any friend of the future than you were in the old Langen Waldstein days to me. Good-night—good-bye.”

It may be granted that vanity, idleness, self-interest, have been the chief ingredients in Nessie Pinto’s friendship for Roger Tryan. But when he has *gone*, when she hears the departing wheels of his fiacre crunch along the rough, fir-girt road that leads from the Pension Potpourri toward the Nice high-road, she feels that she would give her life, could the sacrifice cancel all that has passed this evening! Her heart fails her. A nameless terror makes the blood run chill within her veins.

Aurora Skelton, flushed and disheveled from the dance, finds her friend beside the open door a good many minutes later, still looking forth with blank eagerness into the

darkness—still with the letter addressed to Frederick Pinto, Esquire, in her hand.

“We want you awfully, Mrs. Pinto. You must set us all going in the cotillon,” exclaims Aurora, her thoughts intent upon whatever partner of the moment she may have secured. “We want you and Mr. Tryan to lead, and—why, you don’t mean to say you are alone? Mr. Tryan has not forsaken us already, surely?”

“Mr. Tryan has gone to meet Major Pinto,” says Nessie, covering up the address of the letter, and instinctively hazarding the statement about whose veracity she is least assured. “I dare say they have some card appointment or other at the club.”

“So like men—bad creatures that they are! I won’t speak to Major Pinto for a week,” cries Aurora coquettishly, arranging the inflamed shoulder-knots, that, as usual, match her cheeks to a shade. “With our dancing gentlemen so scarce too! Not a good waltzer among them but the poor, ashmatic West Indian. I declare, it’s just shameful. However, if Mr. Tryan is *too grand* for the Pension Potpourri, we must get on the best we can without him. ‘*Quand ong n’a pas ce qu’ong aime,*’” says Aurora, with her fine Skeltonian pronunciation of the language, “‘*il faut aimer cequ’ong a.*’ You agree with me, Mrs. Pinto? Mr. Tryan does not deserve that any one should wear willow on his account?”

“I shall be ready to show you the figures in five minutes. I have only to go up to my room—to read a letter,” says Nessie, in a steady voice. “Get ready the bouquets and ribbons, ascertain if the Pension Potpourri can furnish a decent hand-glass, and by the time the people come in from supper I shall be down. As you say, my dear, we must accustom ourselves to neglect. Mr. Tryan has run away. I suppose I shall have to lead the cotillon with some other rather worse waltzer than Mr. Tryan.”

Mrs. Pinto trips up the rickety staircase, singing—yes, when many things connected with to-night are talked of by many tongues hereafter, Aurora Skelton, to be sure, will have recollections on that point—singing. She gains her bedroom; locks the door; strikes a light. Then, sinking down, faint and sick, into a chair, she tears open Tryan’s letter.

On ordinary occasions, Nessie Pinto would not dare tam-

per with her husband's correspondence. But before the actual, large tragedy of this hour, even her physical fear of Major Pinto is forgotten.

“ Hotel des Trois Empereurs,
“ Nice, Midnight.

“ MY DEAR PINTO,—It is likely, as you must know, that I shall start on a longish journey in a few hours' time—likely, though, of course, not certain. I am strongly reminded just at present of a very old Joe Miller. You recollect the story of the fire-eating Irishman? He swore he had seen anchovies growing on trees in the West Indies, and only recollected after he had winged his man that he should have said ‘ capers.’ But the mistake did very well to hang a duel on. Your friend, the Monte Carlo Fitzgerald, argues, it would seem, after the same fashion.

“ I return some scraps of paper which it may be satisfactory to you to destroy with your own hand—and remain, always, faithfully yours,

“ ROGER TRYAN.”

This is Roger's letter. The scraps of paper consist of a dozen or more I O U's and bills, all of different dates and value, and all bearing the scrawling, barely legible autograph of Major Frederick Pinto.

As Nessie looks through them, one by one the circumstances under which most of this blackmail was levied come back to her memory with unwelcome clearness. That trifling little racing matter, when Major Pinto was obliged to ask for a temporary loan at Baden; the embarrassment when their remittance was overlong in arriving from Pinto's people in England; the cash that was not forthcoming for traveling expenses when she, Nessie, needed sudden change of air from Evian-les-Bains; and so on. Of some later loans, drawn this winter, in Nice, Mrs. Pinto, to do her justice, knows nothing. Twenty-five, fifty, a hundred, another hundred—as late, this one, as last Monday! She reckons them up roughly. She bethinks her of the sums she has herself playfully borrowed of Roger, when her gambling purse had run short—no uncommon accident—at Monte Carlo; bethinks her of verbal debts dating as far back as Langen Waldstein, and of which Roger, in his carelessness of money, has probably lost count. Then, rapidly putting herself through an exercise of mental

arithmetic, she computes the sum-total of their obligations to her friend.

And he has finished with them; has said his last good-bye to the wife, lent his final napoleon to the husband. Yes; reading between the lines of his short note, she discerns *that*. Should Roger Tryan escape with his life from Zecca's pistol—should he never become Joyce's husband, and the son-in-law of Mrs. Dormer—with Major and Mrs. Pinto he has finished!

"Are you coming down to-night, or not?" cries out Aurora Skelton, as the knuckles of that vivacious young lady rattle loudly at the door. "The poor West Indian has smoked a stramonium cigarette, and is willing to lead off the cotillon while his breath lasts, if Mrs. Pinto will be his partner."

"Mrs. Pinto is not coming," answers Nessie shortly. "You must get on with your cotillon as best you can. Mrs. Pinto feels tired, and will appear no more to-night."

Let us leave her to her vigils, reader! Let us imagine, with what brevity we may, the moment when Pinto, returning from his haunts, red-eyed, empty of pocket, in the winter's morning shall find Nessie—still in her brave attire, still with the scraps of paper between her cold hands—to bid him welcome!

CHAPTER VII.

THE MONTE CARLO TRAGEDY.

THE four-and-twenty hours that follow upon her meeting with Roger Tryan are passed in a fever of expectation by Joyce.

She has said "Yes," with readiness more than mistrusted by Mrs. Dormer, to the scheme for leaving Nice; has worked cheerfully at the thousand small details of packing, bill-paying, and millinery necessitated by their sudden exodus. She has even, at her mother's entreaty, written a pleasant, gossiping little note to John Farintyre—a note setting forth the expedience of trying Roman air, without delay, for one's poor, overtaxed nerves, and containing (for this Mrs. Dormer stipulates) a description of their last night's visit to Monte Carlo—with only the part of Hamlet omitted from the play!

But, though she sustains her courage stoutly, Joyce Dormer's heart is on fire. She listens to every ring at the outer door-bell, to every fiacre that rattles down the street, almost to every footfall that passes along the pavement beneath her window.

Roger Tryan *must* come. So she repeats to herself with the passionate stubbornness that implies a mental doubt. When was Roger's word other than a bond? Come he will and must. The clearing-up of many a by-gone trouble, explanations before the logic of whose pathos even Mrs. Dormer shall melt, will follow. A little time longer, and this strained travesty of life, in which for more than two years they have all acted a part, shall be put away—John Farintyre, even, be brought to see the wisdom of a frank, a loyal disloyalty. A little longer, and she shall taste happiness at the mere vision of which her worn cheeks flush, her eyes fill with the youthful hope and tenderness from which she has been too long alienated.

But the silent hours come and go; the January twilight dies; the lamps are lighted. By and by Mrs. Dormer, curiously pale and tired after paying a round of farewell visits, comes home to dinner. And still there is no word of Roger Tryan.

Will he write? Will he call ere they depart to-morrow? Or—but Joyce's heart scouts the supposition ere it has time to form itself into words—has he fallen back already under the estranging influence of the last two years? Will that influence keep him from the reconciliation that it needs but a hand-pressure, needs but a couple of hurried sentences, to bring about?

Mrs. Dormer, I say, looks pale. More than this, Mrs. Dormer's magnificent digestion, for once, would seem to be at fault. This most philosophical of women turns away from the sight of food. Her hands play her false when she attempts to use a knife and fork.

Joyce comments, jestingly, upon the fact.

"I think you must be leaving your heart behind you in Nice, mother. Do you know that you are looking as white as a little specter? Do you know that your hands tremble to such a degree that you can not carve?"

"My wrists are tired. The natural result of holding up a long dress," answers Mrs. Dormer with presence of mind, but not encountering her daughter's eyes. "Can

any fashion be more absurdly tyrannical than that of trailing yards of silk in the dust simply because a score of tiresome visits have to be paid!"

"But surely you did not make the round of all those houses on foot, mother?"

And as she asks this question Joyce looks a little more narrowly at her mother's face.

"I dismissed my fiacre at the Bosanquets. It was shorter for me to run through the gardens of the Maison Narcisse, and so gain the side entrance of the Villa Cairngorm. Lady Cairngorm is quite in despair, Joyce, at our departure."

"Lady Cairngorm has had hopes of me as a medium for her *séances*. 'With those eyes of yours,' she always says, 'those big, blue, somewhat vacant eyes of yours, my dear Miss Dormer, you ought to look further into the Unseen Universe than the rest of us.'"

"The Unseen Universe!" ejaculates little Mrs. Dormer.

A volume of adverse criticism is epitomized in her manner of accenting these words.

"And do you know, mother, I have wondered, now and then, if old Lady Cairngorm be right. I feel myself at times, especially when Stradivarius is in my hands, that I get deeper glimpses under the surface of things than is altogether canny."

"My dear Joyce! This might do very well for dear, credulous Lady Cairngorm. For you and me it is sadly idle talk."

But Mrs. Dormer's face grows whiter and whiter. She puts down, untasted, the morsel that, when Joyce spoke, was on its road from her plate to her mouth.

"Why, only this evening when I was waiting for you to return, I took my violin and played as you like to hear me play, mamma, letting my fingers guide themselves. The saddest, strangest wail came from the strings—murmurs, I could not help thinking, like those that you might catch from the lips of a dying man."

Pushing her plate away, Mrs. Dormer rises hastily from the table.

"Such notions are morbid! Such taste belongs to an inferior walk of art! In music, or literature, or painting, no person of culture ever runs after the sensational."

"Unfortunately, in real life, the sensational runs after

us," insists Joyce. "Cultivated taste may do much. It can not keep tragedy from sometimes knocking at our doors."

Mrs. Dormer moves an uncertain step or so; stooping, she rests her lips upon her daughter's silken head.

"We are overstrung, both of us, my poor child. The last forty-eight hours have been quite too full of painful emotions for the good of one's nerve-centers. We must go to rest immediately—I confess myself, for once, to be beyond food—must get up all the strength we can for to-morrow's needs. Our train starts at five minutes before two, and there are cards still to be left—farewells to be taken before we depart."

When to-morrow comes, however, Mrs. Dormer's nerve-centers do not seem to have righted themselves. She admits that she has not slept an hour. Her cheeks are still unnaturally pale, her hand still trembles. Nice, she declares, did she stay longer here, would kill her. Filippo Filippi was right;—for the disorders of a delicately strung nature must not a poet be the best of all physicians? The irritating climate of the Riviera disagrees with her frightfully. Rome, Pisa—any place sheltered from the influence of this Mediterranean air—must be reached, and without delay.

As the morning advances Mrs. Dormer's symptoms of uneasiness increase. She has not stamina enough left to face the light of day, or the eyes of her acquaintance. A commissioner must take round such cards as still require to be left, and she will bid farewell to no one; to no one save her old friend, Lady Joan Majendie, with whom she whispers during a mysteriously agitated five minutes, Joyce present, in a remote corner of the room.

To get away from Nice; never for an instant to lose her daughter out of her sight—these seem to be the two imperative desires by which Mrs. Dormer is possessed. And she succeeds in carrying both into effect. Very few of their acquaintance, as it chances, are at the station on this Thursday afternoon, although Thursday is the day on which you may hear Beethoven, Spohr, and Mozart, played by the finest band in Europe, gratuitously. And these few—long afterward, Joyce grasps the significance of that fact—do not press forward to wish the departing travelers Godspeed.

Mrs. Dormer gives a sigh of relief as the train glides forth into the open country. It is one of those exquisite days when only the name of the month can recall to Northern senses an idea of winter. The fair broad plain of vine and olive on the left is bathed in mellowest sunshine; on the right an outline of distant Corsican mountains shows, transparently clear, above the waveless purple of the sea. Only one other passenger is with them in the carriage—an Englishman, absorbed in his newspaper at the further end of the compartment, and evidently belonging to the safe tourist class, who interview Europe with the aid of coupons; the last human creature living, thinks Mrs. Dormer, recovering her spirits, from whom enlightenment as to Nice or Monte Carlo goings-on need be feared.

“Thank Heaven, we are off safe! I feel as though an incubus of dull care, a weight as of some horrible nightmare, had been taken suddenly from my shoulders.”

The remark escapes her lips unguardedly. It is far more Mrs. Dormer’s habit to use speech for the concealment, than for the expression, of her thoughts.

Joyce’s look is restless. She leans forth her face to catch a last glimpse of Nice with a wistful eagerness that it may be well John Farintyre is not present to witness.

“I might be ready also to thank Heaven if I knew we were leaving Dull Care behind us, mother. Unfortunately, he is as prompt a traveler as we are. You remember Hans Andersen’s story of the Quarter Day Flitting? All the family and their belongings are there—the grandfather’s crutch, the baby’s cradle—and, as they start, the skeleton leaves his cupboard, Grim Death jumps up behind the coach and accompanies them on the road. Depend upon it, though we may not see him, our own particular skeleton has forsaken his cupboard, and travels with us to-day.”

The color of Mrs. Dormer’s cheek does not improve at the suggestion.

“You are in the groove of sensation still, Joyce. The calming influences of ruins and galleries and soft Campagna air are as needful for you as for me. We shall come in for the best season of Roman flowers,” Mrs. Dormer adds—“violets, narcissus, roses, and a little later on—orange blossoms.”

There is a perceptible, an intentional shade of meaning in the way the last word is uttered.

“You did right to put violets the first on your list, mother,” is Joyce’s quiet answer. “They are the fittest of all flowers to associate with Rome—the flowers of death.”

Amongst the thirty or forty persons who quit the train at Monte Carlo station is the English traveler mentally labeled by Mrs. Dormer’s inner consciousness as “Safe.” It chances that, in the hurry of getting out, this traveler leaves his newspaper, the current number of the Nice “Anglo-American,” behind him. It also chances that Joyce, mechanically, rather than because she feels an interest in the chronicling of Nice fashionable lives, takes the paper in her hand, and glances carelessly down its columns.

“‘The Monte Carlo Tragedy—Latest Particulars’—Why, mother, what can this tragedy be about? You and I are always the last people to hear news. ‘Mysterious Disappearance of—’”

So far and no further has Joyce had time to read aloud, when the paper is snatched from her—I should say with a gesture of violence, if any action of soft, dimpled Mrs. Dormer could be violent—is torn hastily into fragments and scattered through the open carriage window.

“Such publicity is quite too bad! The reports of these sensational proceedings should not be given in respectable newspapers. What have young unmarried girls—what has a child like you—got to do with the suicides and horrors that are the scandal of the Monte Carlo gambling-tables?”

Joyce looks at her mother with just that shade of surprise that borders nearly on a suspicion.

“One has got to do with everything, mamma. Young women can not be kept under a glass-case simply because they wear no wedding-ring on their third left-hand finger! You have aroused my curiosity,” she persists. “What can there be in this Monte Carlo scandal that makes it more tragic than every ‘Times’ newspaper one reads, or more dangerous than every walk one takes along the London streets?”

Mrs. Dormer’s most intimate enemies—let me use stronger language, her dearest friends—agree in crediting her with the virtue of uniform truthfulness. She is too refined of taste, too cultivated of understanding, has too

acute a knowledge of social intercourse, too keen a sympathy with common human likes and dislikes, not to hold trivial and purposeless fictions in contempt.

When unlooked-for necessity arises, when embroidery has to be wrought on a large scale—like that of the Gobelins, say, or the tapestry of Bayeux—little Mrs. Dormer rises to the situation; then is she an artist who falters not nor fails over her work.

“There are scandals and scandals, Joyce. Some things may not be intrinsically worse than others, but they are more unbecoming for a girl of your age to read about. You know the Polish countess we remarked so often in brown-and-gold at San Remo? ‘*Si jeune, et déjà Polonaise!*’ little Doctor Vladimer used to say to her. Surely it could not be especially edifying for you to learn in what society, and carrying away what amount of rouleaux, that lady had decamped from Monte Carlo?”

For a few seconds Joyce looks fixedly at her mother. She is unsuspecting of deceit: and yet, as I have said, her state of mind approaches that of suspicion. Unconsciously to herself, she is on the lookout for some grim logic of facts that shall account for Roger’s silence.

“Would the disappearance of a Polish countess be called a tragedy,” she asks, “even by the horror-seeking editor of a Nice newspaper?”

“It might be a tragedy to the former possessor of the rouleaux—though really I know none of the details. It is the kind of thing I have not patience to read through. Sometimes I have speculated,” says Mrs. Dormer after a pause, “*why* Polish countesses can never be original! If one of the sisterhood would only commit a respectable, commonplace action it would have the zest of an epigram. As it is”—Mrs. Dormer glances up with her soft eyes at the scarce softer heaven—“one knows the Continent too well, has seen too much of that dull comedy called fast life, to be amused by the disreputable.”

And Joyce, whatever vague misgivings trouble her conscience still, is silenced.

CHAPTER VIII.

OIL IN ONE'S MACARONI.

THE night is chill when they stop at Pisa Station, and as their journey is to be continued early on the following day, Mrs. Dormer decides to put up at the nearest hotel, an old-fashioned, thoroughly Italian loggia, unmentioned by Bradshaw or by Murray, just within the city walls.

Bare of carpet or matting are this loggia's tile-paved floors. The only vacant apartment is low-roofed and ghostly; a kind of rambling vault upon the ground-floor, full of dark nooks, of possible lurking-places, and hung round with tapestry so gloomy in design and hue it might have more fitly decked an antechamber of the Inquisition than a modern sleeping-room. The quickly served supper is, however, of its kind, good; the handsome waiting-women are courteous; a glorious fire soon crackles and blazes on the hearth. And by the time twelve o'clock strikes from the neighboring church of San Stefano the travelers are peacefully settled for the night—Mrs. Dormer's watch and purse under her pillow; Joyce's treasure, her Stradivarius, placed on a chair so as to be within reach of her hand.

One. Two. Three. San Stefano has boomed forth that weirdest, coldest hour of the February morning, when Mrs. Dormer's slumbers are broken by a cry. She starts up in terror, even her least excitable of brains haunted, perhaps, by some story of darker import than missing rouleaux or levanting Polish countesses; then, collecting her startled senses with an admirable effort of will, raises herself into a listening attitude, and glances round the room.

All is outwardly quiet. The olive-logs no longer flame, but a steady glow from their red embers lights up every corner and recess of the tapestried walls. Mrs. Dormer's purse and trinkets are safe; a primary instinct causes her to grope for these. Her daughter (second care of her soul) lies asleep, but with a face livid as death, with throat and neck convulsed, with eyes half unclosed, with parted, murmuring lips.

“Stradivarius— Mother, you should have given it me back. *That* at least, was my own.” So sleeping still, the girl wanders on, in short, incoherent utterances. “But you have broken my heart at last—thrown it away for your pleasure. Roger! You here too? then let us make up old quarrels. What do you shrink from, mother? Why do you look so strangely at Roger’s hand? Mrs. Pinto a false friend to him—ay, we knew that, long ago—a fair-weather friend, a creature of paint and paste, and I—oh, my dear, let us go back to the old happiness— You will come to-morrow. You will bring me the violets you promised—not—ah, God, not those! They are red, they are covered with blood. Take them from me.”

A cry, bitterer, longer than the former one, rings through the room, and in another half minute Mrs. Dormer, hastily shawled and slippered, stands beside her daughter’s pillow.

“Joyce, my love, listen to me. Wake up thoroughly and forget all you have been dreaming about. The macaroni must have had oil in it! Impossible for the conscience to be at rest, with the digestion in rebellion.”

For Mrs. Dormer, a lax believer on many points, does yet cast sure anchor in the haven of matter-of-fact. Holding the old-fashioned process called introspection in contempt, Mrs. Dormer believes that all solution of our mental and moral troubles ought to come from the side of physiology. Love, fear, regret, she considers subjects for the microscope or dissecting-knife; and passionate grief—“an ophthalmic affection,” as some one once suggested, “of the nerve of the fifth pair!”

“If we could have perfect cooking we should have perfect dreams. Until that millennium comes—especially after supping in an Italian inn—we may do something by directing our thoughts wisely when we lay our heads on our pillow. How would my life have been ruined had I not looked upon the banishing of ugly nightmares *as a duty*. Pray command yourself, my dear. Endeavor to put whatever nonsense you may have been dreaming about away from you. Twenty grains of chloral, some hours of sound sleep, and you will wake up a different creature.”

Mrs. Dormer, after striking a light, searches among the compartments of a traveling-bag for her poisons, scales,

and weights. And Joyce comes slowly back from the land of specters to reality.

Her small white face is bathed in sweat; her damp hair hangs in masses round her forehead. Her features have the pinched look of one whose feet tread the banks of the chill ford, who listens to voices, sees visions, that the bystanders, strong, healthy, broken-hearted, wot not of!

“Come to me, mother—quick. I want to get warm—I want to feel your hand. Leave drugs and weights and measures alone,” she cries impatiently. “What need have I of drugs? Hydrate of chloral—‘arrest of function—normal molecular action’—Yes, I remember it all; I know what kind of peace of mind can be bought by chloral. We tried the efficacy of manufactured sleep pretty often, if you recollect, two years ago, at the time I tried to leave off thinking of Roger.”

Mrs. Dormer shivers. For a person of strong reason, with whom sentiment and emotion are nowhere, she really has become absurdly impressionable during the last eight-and-forty hours.

“We ought to have taken places in a sleeping-car, to have traveled on to Rome without stopping—the plan dear, wise Lady Joan recommended. These atrocious tapestries, even without oil in one’s macaroni, would account for any number of bad dreams.”

Joyce, upon this, raises herself to a sitting position. Stretching forth her hands to her violin, she plays a few muffled pizzicato notes that in the night’s dead silence sound to Mrs. Dormer uncomfortably like the moaning of a human voice. The embers of the wood fire at this moment fall together. They send up a last ruddy flame upon the opposite wall; they light into weird distinctness one particular scene not two yards distant from Joyce’s bed—a scene of which the chief foreground figure is a wounded knight, pierced through mail and corslet, and with his enemy, masked and sinister, bending over him in his death-swoon.

“He is there—I was dreaming of him when you woke me, mother,” exclaims the girl, pointing with her pale, earthy cold hand to the wall. “Who shall read the meaning of my dream? Who shall say it was not fate that sent us to this hotel, into this room, to-night?”

“There is no such entity as fate, my poor child. We look back from experience to accident. We talk, because

our mothers and grandmothers did so before us, and because we inherit certain of their fibers, about destiny."

"At first we were traveling away from Nice, you and I together. This was the beginning of my dream. And the Englishman who got out at Monaco left his 'Anglo-American' behind him, just as it all happened, really, on our journey to-day."

"Say, rather, yesterday." Mrs. Dormer glances across with pathos at her vacant pillow. "We are already shivering in the small hours of February the 1st."

"I took the paper up, and you bade me read it aloud. The first word I saw was Roger Tryan's name, printed in blood-red letters underneath 'The Monte Carlo Tragedy.'"

"Roger Tryan—the hero of our Polish countess's escapade!" observes Mrs. Dormer, with a laugh unsuggestive of amusement.

"That is how your voice sounded in my dream, mother. I tried to read, but could not. Only those words: 'The Monte Carlo Tragedy;' and Roger's name stood out clear before me. And, suddenly, you began to laugh; you snatched the paper from my hand, tore it across, and threw both pieces through the window. Now that I am awake, it seems absurd, but at the time it was the painfulest dream I ever had in my life. For when I looked at that which you had thrown away, I knew that it was my Stradivarius."

"It was the oil in the macaroni," sighs little Mrs. Dormer. "But, real or fancied, my sin was scarcely mortal. Some men have held that violins—like hearts, Joyce—are all the stronger for breaking and putting them together again."

"After that I went back with a leap—this made me know that I was dreaming—to the Monte Carlo gambling-rooms. I could smell that sickening mixture of gas and patchouli and attar of roses. I could hear the voices of the croupiers. I saw—I see them now—the eyes and forehead, the bare wrists and bracelets, of Mrs. Pinto. And then, suddenly, I knew that you and Filippo were gone, and a Frenchman I stood near spoke—I don't know what words—and Roger pushed forward and stood between him and me."

"Mr. Roger Tryan, as usual, showed more temper than brains." For the moment Mrs. Dormer is betrayed into this small show of feeling. "But we will put off discussion

of his merits and demerits until I have the negative advantage of feeling warm. What we want now is golden silence. At midday we shall be off—to scenes charmingly remote from overstrained and painful associations. Let us do our best to sleep while we can.”

“I have something still to say, mother—not about my dream, but about that real waking in Monte Carlo. I had got separated from you and Filippo, as you know, just when the royal Austrian people were coming in. And all at once I found that I had mistakenly laid my hand upon a stranger’s arm, a vile-looking man, covered with rings and chains, who turned and spoke to me in French. At the same moment I caught Mrs. Pinto’s eyes—I heard her laugh. And then, instantly, the crowd opened; I saw the Frenchman spin away like a ball, and I knew that Roger was at my side. Mamma, dearest, be patient with me,” she pleads, “only for two or three minutes longer. I want you to answer a question truly, as you would answer a last question I might put to you before I died.”

“Day will be breaking on us, Joyce! Ask me anything you choose at a more fitting time and season. If only for one’s looks’ sake, let us try to get a little sleep.”

“You have seen so much of the world, have read so many books—I think, perhaps, have read so many men’s hearts—that you must certainly know this thing. Could an action like Roger Tryan’s be construed into an insult? I mean—I mean—” As Joyce’s lips falter forth the question, her pinched, small face turns a shade more ghastly. “Is it the kind of thing that ever leads, among men of the world, to a challenge?”

This time Mrs. Dormer gives a laugh whose frank spontaneity might make the fortune of an aspirant actress. And still, it is not the kind of laugh one would care to have graven on one’s recollection.

“Challenges, except among German students and Parisian editors, are as much out of date, my child, as hair-powder. If a gentleman unfortunately meet with insult nowadays, he elevates his eyebrows, lets fall his eyeglass,” says Mrs. Dormer gayly, “possibly writes a letter to the morning papers, and in any case pockets the affront. All these usages are ruled by fashion. One generation carries about a tindery affair called ‘honor,’ ever ready to

blaze, in its waistcoat-pocket, just as another carries a snuff-box, and a third a crutch and toothpick."

"I am glad to hear you speak so lightly! I am glad to think you are *positively* certain. Because—oh, mother, my dream shifted to something too horrible! Come and hold me close. Let me feel your arm, both arms, around me."

She nestles, like a little child seeking for shelter, in Mrs. Dormer's somewhat lax clasp.

"The gas went out, suddenly; the patchouli and rose scents, the croupiers, the gayly dressed crowd, all vanished into darkness. Then I found myself, just, it seemed, as morning was breaking, in that field where they have the pigeon-shooting outside Monaco. And I saw Roger Tryan lying on the ground, with the same Frenchman who spoke to me in the gambling-rooms leaning over him."

"You saw me, also, of course?" exclaims Mrs. Dormer in a forced, unnatural voice. "I'm sure to be the tragic element in every scene with which Mr. Roger Tryan is connected."

"No, mother, you were not there, nor—nor were the Pintos; I saw only two or three men whose faces I did not know, and Monsieur Gervais, the surgeon. Gervais knelt and supported Roger on his arm. It was as plain, all of it, as the tapestry hanging on the wall yonder. No dream of my whole life was ever so fearfully real as this one. Well, and while I was looking, Roger called me by my name, and I went to him. He took a bunch of violets from his breast. Gervais holding him still, and, as I stooped over him, I saw that the violets were covered with blood! I knew that Roger was wounded, dying. And then I heard your voice, and I awoke."

During the narration of Joyce's dream Mrs. Dormer has contrived to glide from her daughter's embrace. She has got back again to the table, and by the feeble candle-light has commenced to weigh out chloral hydrate from a mysterious little stoppered bottle. The hand that holds the scales is firm. Mrs. Dormer adds to, she takes from, the glistening heap of "hell in crystals," until the dose is measured to a nicety.

"Although you do not believe in the virtues of manufactured sleep, my dear, I do. Sleep, at any price, is what my nerves want." And, indeed, though Mrs. Dormer's hand be untrembling, her white face seems to have aged

by a dozen years. "My brain is harassed, not by supernatural visions, but by commonplace bodily fatigue. As to your dream, child," she runs on with a desperate effort at unconcern, "if such nonsense affected one at all it ought to be cheerfully. All old wives' calculations, you know, should be worked backward. To dream of a person's death is omen of his marriage. How if there should be other happy events on the tapis besides a certain Roman wedding to which you and I are looking forward?"

Joyce falls back on her pillow with a gesture of impatience, then, turning her eyes steadfastly toward the window, she resolves to watch for daylight, to dream no more.

Alas! sleep can no more be eluded than it can be wooed by the miserable. The poor girl dreams again and again of her old lover, now in England, now in Nice, now on the moonlit terrace of Monte Carlo. And each time her promised bunch of violets is in Roger's hand; and each time, ere she can approach near enough to take them from him, the violets become red with blood.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. PETER MAGRATH.

BUT when did Rome, true Mother of Consolation, fail of yielding balm to the soul in which art is a passion?

Especially in the present hot-and-cold state of Joyce Dormer's feelings—her heart in revolt at Roger's silence, yet feverishly expectant of news from him by every post—Roman air, Roman associations, are as saving medicine. Mrs. Dormer, clever always at obtaining picturesque environment on moderate terms, has secured to herself the portion of a third-floor flat in a tumble-down sixteenth-century palace, closely bordering on the Piazza del Popolo. From the windows of this lodging can be seen the Hill of Gardens, the fair cypress and ilex groves, the statues, the terraces of the Pincian, with the distant trees of the Borghese Villa, and a glimpse of snowy Apennine for background. February has set in warm, blue, flower-laden. The mere animal sense of being alive is a pleasure. Chloral hydrate may rest for good in its stoppered bottle! No need to seek manufactured sleep in this enervating air, amidst the thousand spirit-healing influences of a Roman spring.

Enervating: the word must ever hold good in speaking of the Eternal City's climate; and still, every hour of the too brief day is occupied, has its own potent and absorbing interest. The forenoons are given up to churches, basilicas, galleries, or to long drives in the Campagna, golden now with cistus, white with stately asphodel. Joyce was a child when last the Dormers visited Rome, and carries in her memory only such surface details as lend a keener edge to present enjoyment. In the afternoon Mrs. Dormer is called upon to pay visits, to shop, to attend to letters—as Easter approaches, it would seem that the Farintyre love-letters fall more than ever into the elder lady's hands. And Joyce, by inadvertence, perhaps—if it were possible for Mrs. Dormer to act inadvertently—is left alone. Alone in their delightfully shabby, scagliolo-floored Roman drawing-room, with the pathetic sweetness of the outside world, her Stradivarius, her own hopes and fears, imperiously shaping themselves at each new moment into melody for companionship!

Should these emotion-fraught Lenten weeks be counted among the least happy ones of Joyce Dormer's life? She herself could scarcely answer that question. There are mental states which quicken the senses, morbidly, like opium. The phase of feeling through which Joyce is passing now belongs to them. Never again shall skies be so sapphire to her, or marble walls so white, or anemone petals so scarlet. Never shall spring violets smell so pungent, or the voices of children ring so clear, as during these weeks of intense moral strain in Rome. And to the true artist temperament this simple fact of heightened physical susceptibility is not without a certain poignant charm.

It is her habit to rise betimes. While the gardens are still deserted she takes a walk each morning, unattended by chaperon or handmaiden, along a favorite dewy path of the Pincian—Rome at her feet, in the distance the gray undulations of Campagna, melting into purple until a silver line above Ostia marks the line of sea. As she passes the shadow of one isolated group of feather palms, Joyce tells herself daily, with the facile superstition of her age, that she reads a good omen in the shifting hieroglyphic cast by the level sun upon the grass! She feels that she *must* receive a letter from Tryan by the early post, and returns home, morning after morning, a color on her cheek, a fire rather than a

light in her blue eyes, to cruelest disappointment. Always is her plate on the breakfast-table empty, always is her mother elbow-deep in letters: business letters from London lawyers, love-letters from John Farintyre, scrawls from Paris milliners (quietly, and without much consulting of Joyce, the *trousseau* all this time progressés,) ominously long missives from Lady Joan Majendie, brief marital notes from poor, dear Mr. Dormer, away still at Naples with his tea-pots.

Early breakfast over Mrs. Dormer must see to her house-keeping; it is a characteristic of this dimpled, guileless little woman that she never allows herself to be cheated—no, not even by a Roman cook; and Joyce has another hour of independence. This is the hour when “Shipwreck” makes greatest outward progress, when her power of composition is at its strongest. Thrice blessed power—divine alchemy through whose means dull care evaporates for the artist heart in golden aerial clouds! Does not composition, if it be written down, require mechanical work; does not mechanical work, while it lasts, bring wholesome forgetfulness? Even throughout the forenoon’s sight-seeing, although ruled paper and her violin are no longer at hand, the people who commit fiascos, the shipwreck in which such people end, are present to Joyce’s mind. Her own poor bit of amateur nineteenth-century music takes to itself color and depth and richness from the ruins of the world’s art, the mighty creations of a thousand years ago, amidst which the girl-composer moves. At two comes luncheon, enlivened often by the presence of some artist or musical friend of former days. Afterward there is a saunter through the Borghese gardens, a visit to some neighboring church or convent. And then Mrs. Dormer’s engagements claim her; and Joyce is left to solitude, her instrument, and her own thoughts till dinner.

A surface observer might well doubt the wisdom of such a plan—might hold that the way to burn Tryan’s image deeper than ever on the girl’s heart would be in this very dreamy Roman life that her mother has chalked out for her. But little Mrs. Dormer knows her work. Roger Tryan’s image, most things connected with poor Roger Tryan, affect Mrs. Dormer moderately just at present. She is in a condition of masterly inactivity, simply purposing to gain, may not one say to kill, time until Easter! On the

Saturday in Easter week it is a tacitly accepted fact that Joyce shall be married. We are already well advanced in Lent, the wedding-dresses progressing in Paris, the settlements in London; John Farintyre is in tolerable temper, a certain untoward affair that might have wrought disturbance to our peace dying, let us hope, into oblivion in the neighborhood of Nice and Monte Carlo. Once married, and the dear child's happiness will be safe—a sincere belief: men and women do not talk pretty euphemisms when they commune with their own conscience. To a wife, impressed by new and graver responsibilities, the details of that wild Monte Carlo escapade, should they, unhappily, come to light, would cause pain, but pain that *must be borne*. What woman among us but has had, alas! to pass through some bitter ordeal of the heart, yet give the world no sign?

And then money, vulgar money, as an anodyne, is so all-powerful, especially for a temperament half-fire, half-dew, like Joyce's! With her touch of genius, her refined, her singular beauty—and all the solid thousands that the elder Mr. Farintyre is ready to settle—to what position, in London or abroad, may she not attain? When only this critical interval before the wedding-day is tided over! When only, under Brussels veil and orange-blossoms, Joyce shall have been brought to swear honor, allegiance, and love to Mr. John Farintyre till death them shall part!

The days, the weeks pass by propitiously. Almost does Mrs. Dormer feel that plaster-of-Paris cupids and barley-sugar temples are in sight. Then, on the very day when Farintyre is to arrive in Rome, occurs an incident, trivial in itself, yet well-nigh causing the downfall of solidier fabrics than barley-sugar; an incident showing the weak foundations upon which the fondest, the most virtuous, human projects stand.

Leisurely strolling, toward sunset, her hand upon her daughter's arm, on the narcissus-studded sward of the Borghese gardens, Mrs. Dormer abruptly finds herself face to face with a Nice acquaintance, bodily escape hopeless, moral deliverance almost equally so. For the acquaintance is an erewhile inmate of the Pension Potpourri—as a consequence must be conversant with the latest news of Major and Mrs. Pinto, with all the miserable history in which Major and Mrs. Pinto are negatively involved. The acquaint-

ance, moreover, has the reputation of being garrulous and underbred; a traveling Mrs. Candor, ever posted in the small English gossip of every Continental town she haunts, and ever ready, in harshest tones, with disregard as to whether the recital entail pain or pleasure upon her hearers, to publish it abroad.

“Mamma,” whispers Joyce, with the kind of instinctive moral shiver that goes before a blow, “do you see who is approaching under the ilex shade? Mrs. Peter Magrath, one of the musical geniuses whom we met in Nice at Lady Joan Majendie’s charity concert. Surely you have not forgotten the poor, little, bowing Belfast husband who told me I should play, as his Gerty sung, ‘with sowl!’ I propose flight.”

“And I—propose civility,” is Mrs. Dormer’s answer. “We will behave ourselves amicably, believe as much only as charity permits of the latest Nice news, and pass quickly on. Dear Mrs. Magrath,” for by this time the lady is within ear-shot, “welcome to Rome. Like so many people of artistic taste, you are drawn to the feet of the great enchantress at Easter?”

Mrs. Peter Magrath is tall, rectangular, flat of profile, determined of mien. Long is Mrs. Peter’s throat and lean, a throat most unsuggestive of sweet or tender melody. She carries a walking-stick; she affects a masculine and swinging gait; she wears a Newmarket overcoat, a stand-up collar, and a man’s hat.

Rome, it has been said, is the city of abrupt contrasts. Could aught more jarring be found than this modern Briton, with her profile and her Newmarket coat, in the Borghese gardens? Mrs. Peter Magrath walking under shelter of the ilex-trees and stone pines; amidst the immemorial avenues of cypress; the fountains plashing into marble basins; gray, broken statues and columns—“All so little changed,” said Corinne, “that Ovid and Virgil might walk here and believe themselves still in the Augustan age.”

She advances, her eyes fixed with a curious expression on Joyce’s face.

“Quite an unexpected pleasure, Mrs. Dormer. That is to say, every one in Nice knew you had gone on to Rome, but one scarcely expected to meet you in any *public place*. Ah, and poor Miss Dormer! She is looking aged, is she not?

A wreck, really, considering the short time. A tremendous talk there was, I assure you, when you went away so suddenly; but for my part I thought your departure very natural. As I said to Peter—”

“I trust Mr. Magrath’s health has improved,” cries Joyce’s mother, by the pressure of her fingers on her daughter’s arm showing her readiness to move on. “The air of Rome so deliciously sedative,” she generalizes rapidly, “invaluable in some complicated cases of asthma—Mr. Magrath quite certain to derive benefit, and—”

“Mr. Magrath derives benefit nowhere,” says Mr. Magrath’s owner rather tartly. “I declare ours has been the oddest kind of wedding-tour imaginable! When once you start the round of these invalid places, the chest doctors spin you on from one to another like a bad penny. If you listen to the chest doctors you would think lungs the only things in the world worth living for. Now there was Porquerolles, the first place we stopped at in the south. Porquerolles suited me to a T. There was a Philharmonic Society, entirely composed of gifted amateurs, the three resident families of the place. I was elected a member at once. We met Wednesdays and Saturdays, and rendered music, *not* as the professionals teach”—Mrs. Peter Magrath’s tone becomes accentuated—“but as we of the Porquerolles Philharmonic felt it ought to be rendered—with soul. We may not, like Miss Dormer, have studied fugue or counterpoint. We looked upon our art as a thing of inspiration, not of rule—yes, and there was not one among us, I may say, but had a spark of the Divine Afflatus! Mr. Magrath, of course, fell ill just when we were in full practice for our Shrove Tuesday concert, and the doctor we called in from Marseilles—I told my husband, because he wanted to get the case off his hands—sent us on to Nice.”

“Where we may be certain Mrs. Magrath’s talent met with fullest appreciation.”

As she utters the compliment Mrs. Dormer turns, uneasily anxious for flight.

“The music world of Nice is too much cut up into cliques for my taste. I have nothing to say for, or against, their Philharmonic Society.” Of which Mrs. Peter Magrath was, possibly, not a member. “But the music in some of the churches was fair; I volunteered my services at two of the choirs in addition to my four hours’ daily prac-

tice at our pension, and I had almost promised to sing in one of the anthems at Easter, when the climate, of course, began to disagree with Mr. Magrath. Equally, of course, the doctor passed us on here. Pray, Miss Dormer," turning her attention again to Joyce, "what outlook in the musical way has one got in Rome?"

"Everything in Rome is musical," says Joyce, glancing across the Muro Torto toward the point where St. Peter's mighty dome cleaves the sunset sky. "In Rome you not only forget your own poorness as a musician, you forget yourself altogether."

The Machiavellian accents of Mrs. Dormer chime in softly:

"When Lent is done with there will be a burst of concerts, public and private, at which talent, a pure soprano voice like Mrs. Magrath's, would be justly valued. Rome has a short season of English gayety, as you know, Mrs. Magrath, after Easter, and before people move on to Naples. At present we are keeping Lent in true Lenten fashion, not even an organ to be heard in the churches."

"Oh, indeed. I have no doubt it suits Miss Joyce Dormer's feelings to be quiet."

Mrs. Peter Magrath gives the stab with slow emphasis, deliberately pausing to watch the effect it shall produce.

Has it ever occurred to you, reader, that a smattering of art or of music makes a narrow soul narrower, extending its scope on the side only of dull and pitiful jealousies? But for her weak thread of a soprano voice, but for her insatiate musical ambition, who shall say that Mrs. Magrath might not have been a passively amiable woman, an innocuous one, at least, like certain insects, which, although devoid of beauty, neither buzz nor sting!

"You have changed sadly, Miss Dormer, since that evening I met you in Nice, at Lady Joan Majendie's, the evening when you improvised, you know—ha, ha! I always laugh when I think of an *English person* improvising—on your violin."

Joyce does not answer. The color comes and goes with overclear distinctness on her transparent face. She feels that while she lives she must remember the moment's vaguely prophetic pain, the grotesque rectangular outlines of Mrs. Peter Magrath, the dusky arch of ilex and pines,

the smell of narcissus, the fountains plashing in the level yellow light.

"I should have called round to inquire, after the afflicting occurrence—I hope you don't feel the glare of the declining sun, Mrs. Dormer? Stand a little to the left, and you will be more in shadow. I should have called to inquire, and to offer—ahem! my sympathy and Mr. Magrath's under the most distressing circumstances, only you ran away from Nice so quick—"

"We were obliged to run! The Riviera climate never suits my throat after January."

Mrs. Dormer makes the interruption in a voice desperately at variance with her own.

"Really! Of course, that is some people's way. In my family we hold it a duty to keep to our post, to live everything down. I dare say I have mentioned to you that I am one of the Treddles, the only family of the name in Great Britain, and all distinguished, one way or another, for our talents."

Mrs. Dormer's neck acknowledges the possibility by a two-inch bow.

"One of my uncles, the well-known Mr. Samuel Treddles, used to have his joke. 'The only crime that can not be lived down,' my uncle would say, 'is poverty.' But then, that was in England, and Mr. Samuel Treddles was a man of position."

"My dear Joyce, we must walk on. At this time of year no one should be abroad after sunset."

"Indeed, all the Treddles were carriage people. Before marrying Mr. Magrath I was quite in the dining-out set of my mamma's neighborhood. In these foreign places, ladies, too, without a protector, it is different—flight may have been the best policy! I can assure you, Mrs. Dormer, that we have never lost a chance of publicly expressing our sympathy with you and your daughter. So prejudicial, as Mrs. Pinto and every one else in the pension observed, to have an engaged girl's name mixed up with such a notorious character as poor Mr. Tryan."

Mrs. Dormer's severest critics acknowledge that she is a woman who can not, outwardly, be worsted. Outwardly, she is not worsted at this moment—no, not with solid earth crumbling under her feet, with every dearest hope vanishing in gloomy perspective, with Joyce's eyes, an

anguish in them that she feels, rather than reads, fixed full upon her face.

Mrs. Dormer is not worsted. She is an epitome of statuesque fine breeding holding its own against vulgar assumption, ill-judged sympathy; a model that might almost be held classic in that supreme social art called, in our nervous Saxon idiom, the art of giving the cold shoulder.

“Agreeable to have renewed *one’s acquaintance*,” by how wide a gulf do the italics divide the term from friendship, “in this casual way. After Easter Mr. Dormer will be in Rome. It is possible one may have more time for visiting than at present. We hope sincerely that the invalid will continue to make satisfactory progress, and—and good-evening to you, Mrs. Magrath. We must run home with all haste, Joyce, unless we would have the Borghese malaria overtake us.”

CHAPTER X.

BLUE SILK AND COBWEBS.

JOYCE walks quietly back along the Roman streets, thronged and full colored in this hour of March sunset. She goes through her dinner, or a pantomime of dinner, as usual. She talks about the plans made for to-morrow’s sight-seeing, about John Farintyre, at this moment traveling by express train Romeward—her cheeks all the while growing whiter and whiter, her eyes larger, her lips more rigidly unsmiling.

By and by, the time drawing near when Farintyre’s arrival may be looked for, calmly, but with a manner only the more vividly in earnest by reason of its calmness, the girl reverts to their meeting with Mrs. Magrath in the Borghese gardens.

“You heard, of course, what words were spoken, mother. I should like you, before John Farintyre comes, to tell me the meaning of them?”

“And I,” answers Mrs. Dormer promptly, “would willingly be spared the pain of recalling Mrs. Magrath or her conversation to my memory. I told you beforehand that we would believe as much only of her Nice gossip as charity permitted.”

Joyce moves across into the recess of a window, which she opens, allowing the chill *cattiva aria* of the Roman night to blow upon her face.

"This is not a time, mother, to talk of charity. The burning question for me is *truth*. I am always giving you pain, I know. You dislike going back upon the past, and if it were possible I would never mention again a name and a subject that can only bring with them bitter discussion."

To this Mrs. Dormer gives quick assent.

"Such silence would be wise. The past is dead and buried, and—"

"But it is not possible," Joyce persists. "You heard the hints thrown out by Mrs. Magrath. From the expression of your face I believed you read between the lines more clearly than I did. Was it so?"

"I read, too clearly, that Mrs. Magrath's intentions were unamiable," says Mrs. Dormer, gaining time. "I have traveled much, have seen many unlovely types of our poor countrywomen. Mrs. Peter Magrath eclipses them all."

"Still, there must have been a foundation for her hints. She does not approve of me, artistically, perhaps. At Lady Joan Majendie's concert some very weak performance of mine was received by our friends with good-natured leniency that Mrs. Magrath's finer critical sense would not allow her to indorse. But it is just when people do dislike you that they are moved to tell unpalatable truths. 'Expressions of sympathy—distressing circumstances! Prejudicial to have an engaged girl's name mentioned in connection with Mr. Tryan's.' " The words come from Joyce's blanched lips with a gasp. "Can you guess at the drift of all this? Do you see the smallest clew to the meaning of such language?"

"Would it not be politic to regard Mrs. Magrath and her speech as below our notice?"

"No, mother; not at the point where I am standing now. I have got on well, you will say, during the last weeks. There has been so much to see, to think of—and I have done my utmost to forget my own pain, my own wretchedness, in my work. I have tried with a will to keep up from the time we left Nice, as I shall keep up to the last. But it is only my body that is better. A fever consumes my heart." And saying this she clasps her slight hands together piteously. "Every day since we arrived in

Rome—yes, sooner or later, the truth must out—I have expected a letter, a word from Roger Tryan, and none—none has come.”

Mrs. Dormer is as unencumbered by old-fashioned prejudices as most people. But as her daughter pleads to her, that inconvenient secretion of the brain, that peculiar arrangement of molecules, called conscience, does prick her sore.

“A letter from Roger Tryan!” she stammers. “Why, you ceased to correspond with Roger Tryan years ago. And under present circumstances—John Farintyre’s feelings—”

Mrs. Dormer’s own feelings would seem to overcome her. For once, she is actually at a loss for words.

“During the half hour I was with Mr. Tryan in the gardens at Monte Carlo we talked of many things,” goes on Joyce, still in the same quiet, unnaturally intense voice. “You have never once spoken to me of that meeting, mamma.”

“It is a subject about which delicacy has bidden me be silent, child.”

“But you must know that Roger and I could not meet without looking back upon our lost happiness. We are young still, mother, Roger Tryan and I! Nothing actually stands between us.”

Mrs. Dormer gives an inward shudder. It seems to her as though a spectral figure intervened between her daughter’s head and the deep, iron-blue background of night sky.

“And so, after talking of the past, it happened that we found ourselves speculating a little about the future.”

“The future of a beggared man.”

“Beggary is an elastic term, mamma. When our engagement was first broken off, Roger Tryan had some means left. He had a university training and—”

“Three hundred a year and a degree—to use one word instead of seven—starvation!”

“But we are talking of the present, of our meeting at Monte Carlo. Roger said enough to make me think he would give up his present associates, and essay a fresh start in life.”

“Fresh starts, as a rule, end in fresh downfalls,” observes Mrs. Dormer, seeking safety in a generalization.

“That may or may not be true, mamma. In any case,” Joyce adds, with firmness, “we did look forward with something like hope to the years that lie before both of us. And I am glad to remember. Whatever happens, I shall not break with Roger again as a friend. On that point I am resolved. I shall not break with Roger Tryan again, whatever becomes of my life.”

Mrs. Dormer’s face is eloquent, though her lips speak not.

“For I made my peace with him. Roger asked if it was altogether too late for him to move for a new trial, and I promised him a hearing, if he would call on us next morning in Nice. Well, although he never came, although I have had no word or letter from him since, I can not believe Roger Tryan capable of falseness. Oh, mother,” she exclaims, with a sudden change of voice and color, “is it possible that some new misfortune has come to him? That horrible dream I had at Pisa seems to accord with the hints we heard to-day. Let us look in the arrival list, find out the Magraths’ hotel, and hurry there before John Farintyre arrives. Let us learn the worst—or make ourselves sure that there is no worst to learn.”

A look of wild terror is on Joyce’s face. Her quick, excited movements, her broken utterance, betoken her to be in a mood for any enterprise of mad, convention-breaking despair. And Mrs. Dormer knows that the moment for decisive action has come. Now is the whole future prosperity of her child’s life to be won or forfeited. Now must she, Mrs. Dormer, speak, or forever after hold her peace.

Crossing the room, she rests her hand warningly on the girl’s wrist.

“Have we sunk so low, Joyce, have we so little self-respect left, that we would expose ourselves to the world’s cold pity? The Magraths know what every one in Nice must have known, that you were seen at Monte Carlo on Mr. Tryan’s arm. It was a deplorable imprudence. Vain to hope that idle brains will not speculate, idle tongues comment, when once people begin to set society at defiance!”

“But the questions I asked are not answered, mother. Allow the imprudence, which I do not, of being seen, openly, on Roger Tryan’s arm. Where are ‘the distress-

ing circumstances"? Mrs. Magrath spoke as though some disgrace, some calamity, had befallen us when we left Nice in that hasty fashion. There could be nothing more calamitous in walking along the Monte Carlo terrace with Roger Tryan than with any ordinary acquaintance."

Mrs. Dormer moves aside sharply. She turns so that only her face is in extremest outline, the still rounded cheek, the delicate ear, the tip of nose and of eyelash, can be seen by her daughter.

Such a fraction of a profile as this affords no clew as to whether a person busied on a gigantic embroidery has the grace to blush or not!

"Roger Tryan can never become as an ordinary acquaintance while both of you remain unmarried. The remembrance of your unhappy engagement is too fresh for that. The world, much more the ill-natured section of it, will always look upon a renewal of intimacy between you with suspicion. I heard long ago, from Lady Joan Majendie, that the fact of your walking across the Monte Carlo salon on Mr. Tryan's arm was severely criticised in Nice. I also heard—"

"Go on, mamma. What did Lady Joan write? Tell the exact story. Do not stop to consider whether your words give me pain or pleasure."

"I also heard," proceeds Mrs. Dormer, speaking fast, like one who would fain get an unpleasant task finished, "that Mr. Tryan, after bidding us good-bye, returned to the side of his friend, Mrs. Pinto. There was an entertainment that night, it would seem, in the pension where Major and Mrs. Pinto live. At this entertainment Roger Tryan appeared—we can believe was exposed to a fire of merciless raillery, for having renewed his acquaintance with ourselves. Remembering an unedifying scene we were forced to witness on our way to Monte Carlo, you can not doubt *what* influence would be brought to bear upon him. You can not desire that on such a theme I should be more explicit?"

Joyce looks faint and sick. She leans her shoulder against the frame-work of the window for support.

"More explicit? No, mamma, I think I have heard as much as is good for me. Poor little mother," she adds in a softened voice, "so Lady Joan wrote (as she wrote once before in Langen Waldstein); you knew the true state of

things all along, only you were too tender, too considerate to tell me. And I—ah, the fool that I have been!” Joyce breaks off: remembering, passionately, her walks in the Pincian gardens, the happy omen on the palm-shadowed grass, the hopes, each successive morning, of the letter that came not. “But I am rightly punished. Was my past conduct to Roger so upright that I should like to be treated with good faith by him now?”

“You should not take everything with such terrible seriousness,” says Mrs. Dormer uneasily. “Roger Tryan, of course, knew how matters stood between you and John Farintyre.”

How did they stand, mother? Was I not, virtually, my own mistress? A loophole of escape had been left open. It was decided by John Farintyre, at Clarens, that if either of us saw fit to change before next April it should not be accounted as falsehood.”

“Poor John Farintyre!”

Mrs. Dormer turns pale as the ejaculation escapes her.

“You do well to pity him,” exclaims Joyce. “We have drifted further and further into this loveless engagement, until it seems likely we shall end by marrying—who shall say with what prospect of happiness? But on that January night, at Monte Carlo, I might have got my freedom without disloyalty. I should have told Roger Tryan so, if he had kept his promise—had called at our lodging—next morning.”

“Roger Tryan acted wisely in staying away.” And these words are brought out by Mrs. Dormer with firmness. “Men view such things in a lighter spirit than we do. As regards that luckless evening, I can quite imagine Roger returning, as a kind of duty, to Mrs. Pinto. She was under his escort, and—”

“And, naturally, would require his attendance throughout the evening. You are right, mamma; I am sure men do not view such things as we do. To waltz at a party presided over by Mrs. Pinto would be a kind of duty. Small wonder Mr. Tryan felt in no mood for calling on us the following morning.”

Joyce stops short. Her face droops forward on her breast, her arms hang nerveless, heavy, at her side.

Still and peaceful is the breath of the Lone Mother on this fair night of southern spring. The stars look calmly

down, as they have looked through centuries of bloodshed and of sin, upon moldering fresco, cypress-shaded convent garden, mosaic-crowned gateway, and yellow-flowing Tiber. The campagna plains, lighted by a strip of crescent moon, lie wrapped in the humid sleep which is their beauty and their desolation.

After a long silence, Joyce Dormer rouses herself with a start.

"A lovely evening, is it not, mamma, for John Farintyre's first impressions of Rome? But chill—one almost feels malaria in the wind." She turns away, shivering, from the window and its peaceful outlook. "It must be nearly time for me to think of dressing."

In accordance with their simple, unpretentious habits, Mrs. Dormer and her daughter are clad in classically draped, gray cashmere; no bows, flounces, furbelows, or other pride of milliners, and horror of artists, marring the gracefully severe effect of their attire.

"To think of dressing! You are absolutely neat and fresh, child. How could you be more fitly dressed than at present?"

"I am afraid Mr. Farintyre is not educated up to the point of appreciating fitness," Joyce remarks. "Mr. Farintyre likes to see me in pale-blue silk, poor man, or he fancies so."

"Pale blue must always be the true complement of a wild-rose complexion. The preference is artistically correct."

"But scarcely original. At some foolish æsthetic London party, last season, I wore a blue gown, and Mr. Farintyre overheard a speech one degree more foolish than the party, about a goddess and a cloud. He has felt himself safe ever since, under the precedent of another man's taste."

"And you mean to wear a blue gown to-night?"

"I mean to do more. Mr. Farintyre has an ideal—we hear of her pretty often! Recollect Rosie Lascelles before the footlights of the Ambiguity. Mr. Farintyre likes to see me heavily loaded with metals. I will put on the one blue silk dress I possess, and the least hideous of the sets he has sent to me, or rather to you, of late, as an adornment."

Mrs. Dormer is ill-satisfied with the girl's tone, with her restless movements, with the feverish glitter of her eye.

"Look in the mirror, Joyce. Use your own taste, and say if a rustling blue silk, if Bond Street jewelry, will accord as well with our tattered tapestries, our cobwebs, our scagliolo, as the dress you wear?"

"It is high time to leave off thinking of my own taste," is Joyce's answer. "My own taste, up to the present hour, has brought everything and everybody connected with me to sorrow. Far better—surely you must agree with me there, mamma—that I began to think of Mr. Farintyre's."

And when, in due course of time, John Farintyre arrives, looking very British, and new, and out of place in the dusky, sixteenth century palazzo, a vision in azure silk, with filigree gold ornaments on throat and wrist, advances to the top of the staircase to meet him.

"Welcome to Rome," murmurs the girl as her cheek, wet with recent tears, rests for one instant upon her lover's waistcoat. "Mamma and I are glad to see you, Mr. Farintyre."

Then she lifts her face up, smiling bravely. And Farintyre, whose instincts are tolerably reliable, knows that Joyce Dormer never loved him less than at this moment.

CHAPTER XI.

A FACE IN THE CROWD.

NEXT day the English-speaking colony in Rome is awakened into quite a new little sensation. Joyce Dormer—the blue-eyed, violin-playing Miss Dormer, about whose love affairs, my dear madame, so many and such conflicting histories have circulated—appears openly in the public places of the city, at John Farintyre's side.

They walk, during the forenoon, in the Borghese gardens; they drive on the Pincian Hill at the afternoon hour when all the world is there to see; in the evening attend one of the Lenten services in the Sistine chapel, unchaperoned, throughout, by Mrs. Dormer, and with a manner, on Joyce's side at least, as calmly prosaic as though they were Darby and Joan of half a dozen years' standing.

Broken-hearted, designing, victim, or vanquisher—and each version of her history has had its day—one fact is certain now; the girl's sentimental wild oats are sown! Vague-

ly, it had already been whispered that the great firm of Sloper and Scammell were engaged upon settlement-drawing in Lincoln's Inn; that ivory satins, Mechlin flounces, were on their road south, from Paris; orange-flower wreath and bride-maid's trimmings bespoke at Igenio's of the Via Babuina, here, in Rome. These things were whispers, only; in the present overcharged state of the domestic atmosphere Mrs. Dormer herself not having dared to talk of the marriage as inevitable. John Farintyre's solid, flesh-and-blood advent, his constant public appearance at Joyce Dormer's side, are acts. The situation becomes crucial. The English-Roman colony, rousing up after its Lenten quiet, knows a new little sensation!

Is the heroine of the hour sore in her inmost heart, haunted by some ghost of that exceedingly ugly Monte Carlo tragedy? Anglo-Roman society shakes its wise head at the bare suggestion! At the present age of the world, young women on the eve of making wealthy marriages are haunted by nothing.

Look at Joyce Dormer's face, at her frequent smiles (she who, when she was happy, smiled so rarely), at the carnation on her cheek. The poor girl, of course, is Mrs. Dormer's child. It may be a prejudice—but who does not feel that that very singular china-blue eye can *not* be trusted!

Easter Monday comes, with its usual ringing of bells, roaring of cannon, and explosions of fireworks. Before the day is over gracious little invitation cards go the round of Mrs. Dormer's more intimate friends. Hapless Mr. Dormer, still with his tea-pots at Naples, is told, officially, that the pious duty of giving his daughter away in marriage will fall to him next Saturday. On Wednesday, a monster banker's ball is to take place at the Palazzo Orsini, and at this ball Joyce, it is decided, must show herself positively for the last time, as Joyce Dormer, before the Roman world.

“And I hope, for my sake, you will not come out in a school-girl muslin, or dust-colored serge,” says Mr. Farintyre, as he prepares to take leave of his betrothed, late on the Wednesday afternoon. Joyce's somber taste is ever a sore point with young Cræsus, who naturally looks upon his sweetheart—poor Cræsus!—as a kind of palpitating block for the display of stones and stuffs. “I like blue for

a dinner dress, but to my mind there's nothing shows a girl off in a ball-room better than pink satin. By George! you should have seen Rosie Lascelles in hers, that time they were playing the burlesque of 'Frou-Frou,' at the Ambiguity. Surely you have got a pink satin among your trousseau dresses?"

Mrs. Dormer has been careful on the point, knowing John Farintyre's predilection. But Joyce contumaciously declares herself in favor of black. If there is one color wherein the milliners can make her look more hideous than another, she urges, it is pink.

"Besides, it is not correct, is it, mother—you know the unwritten law on such points—it is not in accordance with dull morality for a spinster to wear one of her matron gowns while she remains a spinster?"

"It would be in accordance with every morality to wear that which pleases John Farintyre," says Mrs. Dormer, playfully evasive. "Artistically, the choice is good. Titian and Rubens show us that the blondes of old, Mr. Browning's dear dead women, wore pinks and crimsons without stint."

Joyce bows her head in submission.

"What ornaments shall go with the artistic choice? Mr. Farintyre, you are fresh from London; teach us. What jewelry did Rosie Lascelles wear with her pink satin, when they burlesqued 'Frou-Frou' at the Ambiguity?"

Farintyre passes his fat fingers through his hair, and advocates pink coral, a magnificent set, bought yesterday by himself, in the Corso. Mrs. Dormer inclines toward Roman pearls, also a gift made by Mr. John Farintyre within the past week.

"We will hold a council of war. Run to your room and bring both cases, Joyce—that is to say, if Smart has not already packed them up."

Until the present hour, it has been Mrs. Dormer's harmless vanity to boast of her state as unburdened by a lady's maid. What more interesting spectacle (the real Mrs. Dormer would reason within herself about the world's Mrs. Dormer)—what more interesting spectacle than that of a brave-hearted little woman, gifted, graceful, miserably allowed by an unappreciative husband, and having the courage of her opinions—and of her poverty!

But with other times, other manners. No heterodox

contempt for *£. s. d.*: no picturesque leaning toward vagabondism, under the reign of Mr. John Farintyre. Croesus, junior, intends that his wife shall start from Rome with an abigail, just as he intends to start with a valet, a courier, and a paragraph in "Galignani." "Do our honeymooning in style," wrote the young man, with delicate wit, in one of his more recent letters. And Joyce, passively obedient in all things, now that she has surrendered life itself, accepts Smart, the lady's maid, just as she does the bonnets, dresses, haberdashery, and traveling-gear sent out from London for her use.

"We will make up a blaze of fir-cones, ready for the display," says Mrs. Dormer, approaching the smoldering hearth. Although the Romans call Easter summer, Farintyre's British love of heated rooms must be ministered to—wood, alas! costing five lire the basket. "Mr. Farintyre, will you help? You are just beginning to master the difficulties of an Italian wood fire."

Is this sudden interest in Roman pearls and pink coral a pretext—the question suggests itself to Farintyre's mind—for getting Joyce out of hearing? The moment the girl has left them, Mrs. Dormer crosses to her future son-in-law's side. She rests her hand with emphasis on his.

"The tension is becoming too great—for you and for me. I shall thank Heaven when Saturday is over—when our poor darling's peace and happiness are secured."

John Farintyre shifts, ungallantly enough, away. He takes a few sullen paces that echo and re-echo through the carpetless, barely-furnished room.

"I don't see why the 'tension' need exist. In my humble opinion the whole plan of concealment is a mistake." So after a minute he breaks forth—"Yes, Mrs. Dormer, a deuced mistake."

"It has been successful hitherto, inasmuch as it has stood between Joyce and suffering," puts in Mrs. Dormer.

"And how long do you suppose it can be kept up? Some day or other is Joyce not sure to hear the truth? You say yourself that your life is one long dread. You tremble if you see her speak in the street to a common acquaintance. Well, I have no taste for trembling. I like things on the square. I would sooner have the truth told to Miss Dormer to-night, than a week hence to Mrs. Farintyre."

"You understand Joyce—not quite as well as I do, Mr.

Farintyre! If the—the sad Monte Carlo accident which has caused us so much trouble had come to Joyce's knowledge in Nice, she might—one would grieve to say what the dear, generous, unworldly child might not have done."

"H'm! And if the sad Monte Carlo accident should come to her knowledge now—I mean, any time after next Saturday?"

"If the story of Roger Tryan's madness should be made known to her after your marriage, Joyce can have only one feeling—sorrow that a man who was our friend, once, should have sunk into the gambler and the duelist." And Mrs. Dormer turns her eyes, very full, very pleadingly, on John Farintyre. "Joyce will remember whose name she bears, and her own dignity. As a girl she may have been capricious—overfull, I confess, at times, of high-flown quixotic sentiment. In the heart of a young wife there can be room only for her husband, and for duty."

John Farintyre looks blankly unmoved.

"Can't say that I have had much experience of high-flown quixotic sentiment." The laugh that accompanies this remark is not a reassuring one. "The young wives one sees about in the world contrive to find place in their hearts for a few things besides duty, or their husbands either, it seems to me."

"You must not judge of Joyce by the butterfly crowd among whom you have mixed as a bachelor, in fastish London society. Joyce has a heart—"

"Item: a memory," interrupts Farintyre, with meaning. "Item: a temper—not a forgiving one! She has told me so, often; I respect her the more for it. How will that temper of Joyce's brook the deceit that has been practiced on her?"

"My dear Mr. Farintyre!"

Little Mrs. Dormer really shivers at the coarseness of the expression.

"There are people in Rome, it seems, who know the details of Roger Tryan's wretched business—who were in Nice at the time when it all took place. Well, I repeat what I said just now. I would sooner some of these people spoke out now, than—"

"Hush! not a word of this before her," whispers Mrs. Dormer, returning with quick presence of mind to the hearth, as a step sounds upon the marble, outside. "Why,

here is Joyce back already, and our fir-cones not lighted. And have you brought both sets, my love?" looking round, all smiles and brightness, as the door opens. "Then we will set about our illumination, put ourselves on the seat of judgment, at once."

Not an unsuggestive theme for an artist might be found in the group upon which this illumination rests. The fir-cones' wavering pyramids of flame set forth the subtle lights and shadows of the vaulted Roman room in powerful relief. They flood with transparent ruby Joyce's blonde head and graceful figure, as, kneeling before the fire, she holds aloft one shining bauble after another, toward her mother and Mr. John Farintyre. Not an unsuggestive theme for an artist's pencil: a telling subject, surely, for the moral anatomist, if the hearts of those three persons—so near to each other, and yet so far—could but be laid bare beneath his scalpel!

When the judgment has been passed—Mrs. Dormer, even in the matter of pearls versus coral, gaining her way—when John Farintyre has kissed a farewell upon the cold white hands which, next Saturday, will legally be his, Joyce pushes pearls and coral away from her with a gesture of disgust. Her face wears the same strained, absent look that it wore on that fateful evening when she besought her mother to take her to Monte Carlo. She pushes pearls and coral aside; then wearily seating herself beside the fire, utters a moan that startles even Mrs. Dormer out of her bland philosophy.

Most people are familiar with the word "moan" (a convenient rhyme for alone, groan, or stone) in ballads. It is a sound seldom heard amidst the whirl and tumult of this crowded, all-forgetting, every day life of ours.

"You are overflushed, my child." I don't like that constant flush upon your cheeks." And Mrs. Dormer's voice is tremulous. Do not the hardest among us pity that which submits more readily than that which rebels! "How would it be to spare ourselves the fatigue of this great Roman ball? We need all our strength at present—such fluctuating strength as it is!"

Possibly, in her inmost soul, Mrs. Dormer would be thankful to-night of the quiet of her own room; content to tide safely over another twelve hours in the direction of Saturday's orange blossoms.

“I was never better in my life—bodily,” is Joyce’s answer. “And I am not such a coward as to wish to shirk the ball. I do not sleep much, as you know—the result of my own obstinacy in respect of chloral, perhaps; and a ball gets rid of a night, or the worst portion of it.”

She clasps her hands above her forehead in such a fashion that her face rests in half-shadow, its expression all but hidden from Mrs. Dormer’s sight.

“We have agreed only too often during the past two years”—so, after a space, she resumes—“that Roger Tryan’s name should not be mentioned between us. I must break through the resolution this evening for the last time.”

“As you like, Joyce. I am in favor of outspokenness always, still—”

“After Saturday you may be sure I shall never talk—we will hope, shall never think of Roger again. But to-night, for the last time, I am going to weary you with the old, forbidden subject. Do you think it *possible*, mamma, that Roger Tryan can be in Rome?”

“God forbid!” exclaims Mrs. Dormer, startled out of her habitual self-command. Then, adroitly collecting herself—“I mean,” she hastens to add, “that Mr. Tryan’s presence in Rome is of all things the most unlikely. Let me see. What were one’s last accounts of him?”

“You should know, mother. You have correspondents in Nice. I have none.”

“Lady Joan mentioned some time ago, surely, that Roger Tryan’s friends, those terrible Pintos, had disappeared from the Riviera; Corsica, as far as I can recollect, was said to be their harbor of refuge. To Corsica, no doubt, I—I mean—possibly,”—Mrs. Dormer has the grace to falter—“Roger Tryan may have accompanied them.”

Joyce upon this looks up, a world of restrained, bootless yearning in her eyes.

“If Roger Tryan be in Corsica, it is certain—I told you the same thing that night in Pisa, mother—that some uncanny gift of second-sight must be coming to me. For on Friday evening last I saw him.”

“Impossible!”

“Mr. Farintyre, as you know, had taken me to hear the ‘Tenebræ’ at the Sistine chapel. It was near the end of the service. The psalms had been chanted, the lights,

save one, extinguished. As the long-drawn pianissimo notes of the 'Miserere' were wailed forth in saddest minor, even the fainting, struggling mass of English ladies became silent. Just then, mother, I caught sight of a face, deadly white, against the black-hung wall, but as plain to me as Michael Angelo's 'Last Judgment,' at which, till then, I had been looking. That face was Roger's."

"I repeat, Joyce, that it is impossible. This kind of talk is idle."

Happily for Mrs. Dormer the fire's blaze has well-nigh died. Joyce can not detect the ghastly color of her cheeks.

"Yes, I know all that you would say, all that Lady Joan Majendie has written. Roger Tryan at this moment is in Corsica, in the society of his friends, the terrible Pintos! As far as facts go, you may be right, mother. Yet none the less did I see Roger's face—altered, hollow-cheeked, with eyes that seemed looking back at me from another world—among the crowd who listened to the chanting of the 'Miserere' on Friday night."

Mrs. Dormer is bending over the scanty warmth of the dying fire. She holds a pair of guiltily trembling hands toward its embers.

"If you do not cure quickly of your 'second-sight' I shall advise John Farintyre to consult a physician the moment you reach London—Charming," she goes on, rallying with a strong effort, "to see how the poor fellow studies your every wish! This little Park Lane nest will be so delightful until you can look about together for something permanent!"

A few days before—on the morning, I believe, after attending that Good-Friday service—Joyce, in some moment of unusually frank dejection, confessed herself tired of Italy, of sight-seeing; and Farintyre (or shall we say Mrs. Dormer) telegraphed instantly to secure a furnished London house, no matter how small, so that it abutted on fashion and the parks, for the season.

"London has never been delightful to me latterly, mother, but I dare say it will seem a relief after Italy. There will be clubs in London, and Hurlingham, and city intelligence, and the Derby to look forward to. I feel that I could never go through the strain of foreign traveling without you to amuse Mr. Farintyre."

Mrs. Dormer laughs gayly, all her cool self-possession restored to her.

“In the days of our great-grandmothers there used to be a weird institution called the traveling bride-maid. Would you wish it revived under the still weirder form of the traveling mother-in-law?”

“It would be selfish to hinder you from going on to Naples, mother. Yet I think I shall need you more than papa can. Papa has his bric-a-brac hunting to amuse him, his tea-pots and snuff-boxes to keep him company, and I—”

“You are in a lowered condition of health, my dear Joyce. As soon as you reach town Mr. Farintyre must take you to this Norwegian specialist whom everybody talks about. He finds a name for your disorder merely by touching certain nerves, treats his patients by ‘chemico-psychology’ throughout the London season, and in August packs them off for ozone and shell-fish to Nordeney. In these fitful nervous affections doctors walk, I suspect, in the dark. The empiricists have as much chance of success as the men of science.”

“But are you quite sure my affection comes under the head of ‘nervousness,’ mother?”

“Quite positively sure,” answers Mrs. Dormer, this time without a change of color. “The brain is anæmic—pending Nordeney and shell-fish—would no doubt profit by iron or phosphorus from the druggist’s. In this nineteenth century when denizens of the world begin to see visions and dream dreams, it behooves us to think of tonics.”

Which may be taken as little Mrs. Dormer’s last utterance in the matter of sentiment.

CHAPTER XII.

FATA MORGANA.

THE Orsini Easter ball—a time-honored fairy piece, almost as familiar to Roman sight-seers as the feet-washing of the pilgrims, the fireworks of St. Angelo, or the showing of relics in St. Peter’s! As night advances, the usual outside crowd gazes upon the usual pageant of torch-illuminated colonnades, balconies wreathed in exotic flower

bloom, busts and statues quivering under rose-colored light. In the ball-room, with its mirror-lined walls, its polished oaken floor, its classic, colossal Hercules, is a mob of over three hundred guests. Bearded artists, bored milords, New York beauties, violet-robed churchmen—everybody worth seeing, everybody worth speaking to in Rome, gathered together in the noblest reception-rooms, made welcome by the most charming host and hostess, in the world.

And Joyce Dormer, next Saturday's bride-elect, in her pink satin and pearls, and a dead heart within her breast! Joyce Dormer, the all-unconscious heroine of that tragic story whereof men speak in whispers and women behind their fans, is, from the moment of her arrival, the living epigram, the little dramatic interest of the hour!

Coming forward, with a not too easy air of ownership, John Farintyre claims the hand of his betrothed for the ensuing dance.

"Seems like getting back to the land of the living—have shaken off that confounded sense of chilliness for the first time since I came to Rome." He remarks this as the orchestra strikes up the opening notes of the third waltz.

With politic discretion, Mrs. Dormer has contrived to arrive as late as courtesy to her hostess will allow. "Chapels and tombs and catacombs may be jolly places enough if you have a taste for them. I have not. Never distinguished myself in classics in my youth. Prefer humanity. Prefer the society of my fellow-creatures."

"That is a very prettily turned bit of flattery," says Joyce. "Remember, Mr. Farintyre, I went with you to every chapel, tomb, and catacomb that you have visited."

"And you are with me to-night, are you not?" he retorts. "How could anything be enjoyable"—it is very rare for John Farintyre to hazard so direct a compliment—"without you?"

She lifts her glance to his and smiles the cold dutiful smile that she has trained her lips since the evening of Fairintyre's arrival into wearing.

"But I don't class Rome among things to be enjoyed. One may not dislike a turn along the Corso," says Mr. Farintyre liberally, "or the place with the little stalls and the music—what do you call it?—the Pincian." Joyce thinks, dimly repugnant, of her walks there in the wild

freshness of the spring morning, of the smell of the violets, of the palm-shadow where she daily read a prophecy of Roger's coming letter. "But give me Piccadilly. I know Paris and Vienna and New York—what are they against London? I would sooner walk down Piccadilly than see the pictures of all the Louvres, the marbles of all the Vaticans in the world. Deuced glad I shall be to get away from pictures and marbles too"—he passes his arm around his betrothed's slim waist—"after Saturday."

Joyce makes answer with honestly unintentional sarcasm.

"If your Roman experiences had been wider, you might have been less bored. Fox-hunting exists here, Mr. Farintyre, and hurdle-races are ridden by real English jockeys. People who like such amusements picnic to Metulla's tomb, and light up the Coliseum with Chinese lamps; and on Thursdays, I believe, you may go in a party to Tivoli by train. Besides, if you had belonged to the club, you could have had as much cards and billiard-playing as you chose. Don't run away with the idea that pictures and marbles and the Vatican constitute Rome."

Her tones are friendly, her lips still wear the cold and dutiful smile. But as they float off together, next Saturday's bride and bridegroom, among the throng of waltzers, the old feeling of jealous suspicion corrodes John Farintyre's peace. Never has Joyce appealed more directly to his sense of physical admiration than she does to-night. Classically falling draperies, sad-colored artistic fitness, are not for all men's comprehension, certainly not for John Farintyre's. Could tastes, like votes, be polled, would John Farintyre be in the majority or minority? He likes the brilliant shimmer, the soft frou-frou of a Paris-made pink satin, with a train reaching half-way across a ball-room, and a waist that is a libel on anatomy; likes to see the white arms of the future Mrs. Farintyre bared to the shoulder; likes to see *his* gift of pearls shining on throat and wrist, and among the delicate braids of her blonde hair.

And still, at this moment—yes, as he feels her soft breath on his face, as he clasps her waist, her hand—he knows that he holds *her* not! He knows that the finest, keenest part of Joyce Dormer will never belong to him, that she has thoughts, emotions, likings, contempts, that no effort

of his—no, not even the balance of Farintyre senior, at the banker's—will ever enable him to share.

“How if he had chosen a commonplace, faulty, flesh-and-blood woman, say of the type of Rosie Lascelles, for his wife, admitting it be needful—he will only be four-and-twenty next autumn—for him to marry at all? A Rosie Lascelles—nay, even such a woman as Mrs. Dormer (and, Heaven knows, Mrs. Dormer has brains enough)—would not answer as much above your head as this girl does, would not look you through and through as these blue eyes, so piteously transparent, so infinitely sad in their unwitting cynicism, have the power to look!

Thus ponders next Saturday's bridegroom. Mrs. Dormer, meanwhile, watches the lovers from afar, with a heart almost light. This ball-room vision of Joyce, as a doll, her hair not innocent of curling-irons, her silken skirts trimmed by Parisian fingers, with the exactly orthodox number of flounces, her arms and throat outrivaling the pearls they wear—this artificial vision, I say, seems so much likelier of becoming John Farintyre's wife than the real Joyce Dormer has looked of late, in somber morning-dress, with hair drawn negligently from her pale and yearning face, and with her Stradivarius, Roger Tryan's gift, between her hands.

What a magnificent creature the dear child will become in another year or so, can she but cease to fret over a certain lamentable piece of past folly, and fill out physically and morally! How well suited will she be for the world and for wealth! No mother of fine culture, delicate feeling, could endure to see her daughter make a traffic of affection. The bare thought were repulsive. One's desire is—that a daughter shall subordinate whim to reason, the present to the future. A woman's youth, let her complexion wear as it will, is over before five-and-thirty. Sentiment belongs to youth. Should not the sober half century that comes after marriage be printed in larger letters on life's programme than the half-dozen intoxicated years—fullest of bitterness, often, when fullest of love—that go before?

Mrs. Dormer watches the brilliant, silk-clad vision as it floats round in Farintyre's arms, with a heart all but lightened of anxiety. When the waltz is over, she has the added pleasure of seeing her daughter hemmed in by a

crowd of dancing-men—Roman princes, Russian attachés, an English duke even—all the “best men,” feels Mrs. Dormer, with honorable maternal pride, in the room.

Joyce surrenders her card, with her late learned cold smile, to each aspirant partner in turn, displaying no more warmth in the matter than she displayed in the choice of Roman pearls and pink coral this afternoon. Another and another—why, the girl is having an ovation. Reckoning in the dances reserved, by right, for our excellent John Farintyre, her card must be full. This evening may be considered *safe*.

Scarcely has Mrs. Dormer had time to mentally italicize the word, when an opening among the crush of non-dancers reveals to her, at a few yards' distance, Mr. and Mrs. Magrath, the insignificant British couple mainly through whose whispers Joyce has become the heroine of a tragic history in Rome. And for an instant little Mrs. Dormer, overborne by a presage of evil stronger than her courage, feels strength forsake her. An instant only! Then crossing the intervening space of polished floor with the airiest satin-slippered tread, she accosts and disarms the lady with a compliment.

Overjoyed to see that Mrs. Magrath has come prepared. For Peter, a poor little hectic man, whose head barely reaches his wife's shoulder, carries a large roll of music-paper conspicuously. In every way desirable that ball-room frivolities should be seasoned by the intellectual pleasure of good music. A pity amateurs are so sensitive, can so seldom be induced to delight *the few*, at these large mixed parties.

“My wife has all the attributes of genius, madame,” says Mr. Magrath inflatedly. “Ye may nae be aware that my Gerty, before she married me, was a Treddle. One of the celebrated Treddles. A whole family, madame, of geniuses. My Gerty feels nane o' the ridiculous backwardness in performing which is the bane of your raw amateur. Ye have na heard her in Bark?” Thus does Mr. Magrath style the master of passion music. “Then ye have a real treat in store. The musical Albert Durer, some call Bark, just as others call Handel the musical Holbein. An artist by profession told me in London awhile back, he didna rightly appreciate what counterpoint meant until he heard Mrs. Peter Magrath in Bark. And the astounding thing

is, my Gerty is gude a' round, wi' the voice or the piano. Gude in the delicious Italian phrases of Rossini"—this is how the poor little husband canters through his lesson—"or in the exquisite arpeggios, the delicate, chromatic sinuosities of Chopin." Mr. Magrath pronounces it Shopping.

The delicate, chromatic sinuosities of Shopping!

To her last hour, Mrs. Dormer's memory will, I think, retain these parrot-like, pompous words. So, without will or effort of our own, do we bear about with us the nature-printed pattern of a wall-paper, the color of a carpet that trivially arrested our eyes at a moment when some keynote of happiness or of despair was abruptly struck.

As Mr. and Mrs. Magrath pass away into the crowd—and forever from the boards of this little drama—a slight change of position brings her daughter into Mrs. Dormer's sight. Joyce is on the arm of the young Baron Orsini, the elder son of the house; John Farintyre, a certain dismissed look on his heavy face, vanishing through portals wreathed with orange flower and stephanotis into the hospitable refuge of a neighboring refreshment-room. So much, with a lightning glance. Mrs. Dormer sees, undisturbed in conscience. All, still, goes well. A minute later, and her cheek flushes—pales! Her heart, under its silks and laces, beats, in a tumult of sudden fear. On Joyce's other side—ah, evil omen! inscribing his name on the girl's card—Mrs. Dormer recognizes young Hugh Longmore, the chance-made Clarens acquaintance to whom, simply in that he was disliked of Farintyre and liked of Joyce, poor, obscure, and in every possible way, unprofitable, she hoped that they had long ago bidden good-bye forever.

Of what peril may not his ill-timed advent to-night be the forerunner? Without an instant's hesitation, Mrs. Dormer makes her way across the *salle* to her daughter—the gracefulest, most self-poised little woman that ever threaded a ball-room crowd! She gives young Longmore a friendly, unsuspecting glance from her soft eyes. She extends to him two fingers of each slim, primrose-gloved hand.

This, indeed, reads like a fairy story! Did she not tell Mr. Longmore in Clarens that Italy was the true country of the Fata Morgana? All roads lead to Rome, and all friends seem to travel these roads if we wait long enough.

So pleased to renew one's very short Swiss acquaintance. Mr. Longmore would, no doubt, be making some stay in Rome? A few days, only. Every hour, therefore, will be of value. It would be quite too selfish to talk to Mr. Longmore of morning calls. A lancers—is this indeed a lancers that we see forming? Then Joyce and her partner must hold themselves pledged to a *vis-à-vis*. Mrs. Dormer has promised to walk through one square dance with Prince d'Orellana. Will Joyce and the baron think it *terribly hard* to have two old people in their set?

Her smooth honeyed tone puts Longmore designedly in the cold, just as it used to do in those Clarens days when the young Oxonian was first tumbling, headlong and hopelessly, into love. The moment the lad has bowed himself into the background Mrs. Dormer contrives to whisper words the reverse of honeyed into Joyce's ear.

“Mr. Longmore's recognition of us is an indiscretion. I make it a personal request that you do not encourage him. For a girl in your position over-great popularity is not dignified. It is my wish that you do not dance with everybody to-night.”

A glance almost of the old mirth flashes from Joyce's eyes.

“Dance with everybody, mother? Considering that there are three hundred and fifty people gathered together here, would not such a fear border on the miraculous?”

“I am in no humor for jest. Amicability requires that you should give a few dances to our intimate friends”—oh, Mrs. Dormer, what of the Roman princes, the Russian attachés, the English duke?—“the few dances that John Farintyre can be expected to resign. You will not, I hope, dance with any mere acquaintance, above all with a hotel-made acquaintance, like this young Longmore?”

“This young Longmore did not seem eager to have such greatness thrust upon him,” says Joyce. “Something must have happened, I fear, to shatter our friend's good opinion of us. I was obliged to send Mr. Farintyre across the room as ambassador before I could get this young Longmore to vouchsafe a look of recognition at all.”

Mrs. Dormer's color deepens. A hasty word escapes her without her will.

“Impertinent! If Mr. Longmore's feelings have so cooled—the better for Mr. Longmore! You will be spared

the trouble of telling him your card is full. The young man, of course, has not asked you for a dance?"

"Uncertain whether the young man asked me, or I the young man," is Joyce's answer. "In any case, Hugh Longmore's initials are written on my card opposite number eleven—the quadrille, mamma, that you and Mr. Farintyre have agreed to dance together."

Mrs. Dormer groans in the spirit, yet has she no choice save to accept such bitter irony of facts as may be presented to her. Joyce, already, is moving into position with the baron; her own princely partner, starred, ribboned, decrepit, advances across the room to claim his lancers. Two or three minutes later, and the sets have formed.

Graceful, smiling, younger looking than her daughter, this more than Spartan mother reaps a harvest of admiration as she glides, with girlish airiness, through the figures. She makes the round of the ball-room, chatting soft nothings in her singularly correct Italian, and leaning on old Prince d'Orellana's arm. After this, follow two round dances, danced, from first to last, by Joyce with successive notabilities. Poor Mrs. Dormer! those dances might well be called her Waterloo, the winding up and finish of all maternal triumph! Then comes number eleven, the number opposite to which certain objectionable initials are written on Joyce's card, the quadrille which John Farintyre has dutifully promised to dance with his future mother-in-law.

For a time there seems hope that young Longmore may have awakened to some sense of his own impertinence—in existing! He is nowhere to be seen among the dancing crowd, is not among the men who cluster, in attitudes of greater or less weariness, around opened door-ways. At the eleventh hour, when most of the quadrille sets have formed, he reappears with the air of a man on duty rather than on pleasure bent, walks across to Joyce who, in spite of her mother's counsels, has remained faithfully partnerless, and offers her his arm.

"Your Oxford friend, Longmore of Corpus, is determined not to lose sight of us," remarks Mrs. Dormer as Farintyre leads her away; delicately mindful of his future parent's taste, John Farintyre has organized a set containing at least four titled or notable personages at the upper end of the room.

“Yes, and deuced white Longmore of Corpus looks, sullen as a bear, too—no getting an answer when Joyce insisted upon my speaking to him. What human motive could the man have in turning up here in Rome at such a time?”

“The old story, perhaps, of Lochinvar. Mr. Longmore has come to ‘tread but one measure, drink one cup of wine,’ ” cries Mrs. Dormer prettily.

The suggestion, did John Farintyre follow it, were surely a risky one. Longmore and Joyce tread no measure, it is true, drink no cup of wine. At this moment, however, they are vanishing from the ball-room by a garden window, into scarcely orthodox darkness.

“Joyce behaved with admirable tact, with the greatest circumspection, during our stay in Clarens. Still, I am half afraid that the poor boy’s peace was endangered on the night of that momentous storm. It might be kind to include him among our wedding-guests on Saturday?”

But Mrs. Dormer’s mind is not quite as tranquil as the airy tones of her voice would betoken.

CHAPTER XIII.

JOYCE HEARS THE TRUTH.

THE northern windows of the Palazzo Orsini open upon a vast inner court. Around this court, on three sides, runs a covered colonnade. Beyond are vistas of garden, whence myrtle and lemon odors steal delicately through the midnight gloom. In the background rises the city—roofs, domes, and cupolas vaguely discernible against a starless sky.

For awhile Joyce Dormer and Longmore talk well within the bounds of dulcet inanity. Then abruptly the girl goes back to her old outspoken tone of frank companionship.

“Confess that your opinions of us have changed, Mr. Longmore—that you have no very strong wish of renewing our acquaintance? I promise not to be offended,” she adds. “It was an understood thing between you and me from the first that we should tell each other the truth.”

“And you are so used to sweets that a wholesome bitter might prove piquant,” says Hugh Longmore. “Men who live too long in Italy get surfeited, I am told, of sunshine

and blue skies. Miss Dormer has been fed upon flattery until it palls.”

“You have the gift of insight,” returns Joyce quietly. “Miss Dormer is so accustomed to happiness that she would be glad—oh, glad of the sensation of pain, as a new experience! Is this intended as your answer, Mr. Longmore? You did not mean to recognize mamma and me to-night, if I would have allowed you to cut us?”

“I meant, when I came here, to stop half an hour at most,” is Longmore’s answer. “A friend I have in Rome offered to get me an invitation. I accepted—if I am to speak truthfully—because I heard Miss Dormer was to be the interest of the evening! But I came as a spectator only, in no mood for pleasure. I saw you and Mrs. Dormer surrounded by your friends. Why should you be troubled by an obscure, chance-made acquaintance like myself?”

“When facts are unpleasant I like them told in few words. You meant to cut me, Mr. Longmore?”

“I waited, intending that the recognition should come from you, certainly.”

Joyce Dormer’s next question is put in a quick, short voice, unlike her own.

“And what has changed you toward us? You were hurt, perhaps, that I never wrote to you as I promised? Alas, it seems I have done no one thing that I ought this past winter. When we were at San Remo the days went by in a sort of feverish dream. During our short stay at Nice every hour was disposed of beforehand. Our afternoons were given to visit-paying, our evenings wasted at parties—”

“Occasionally, perhaps, in visits to Monte Carlo?” interrupts Longmore, with meaning. “Pray, Miss Dormer, make no excuse. I did not seriously think you would write to me, even when you were so bored by the dullness of lakes and mountains as to promise it.”

“And did you care very much about my silence?”

The question is timorous; from the lips of a vainer woman than Joyce Dormer might savor of coquetry.

“I ‘cared’—just so much,” exclaims Longmore without a second’s hesitation, “that for weeks—yes, Miss Dormer, for weeks and months—the hour before the arrival of the foreign post seemed to myself the only hour in which I

rightly lived out of the twenty-four. Is that answer plain enough?"

Joyce shrinks before the expression of his eyes. She trifles, as if in absent mood, with her bouquet, a stiffly artificial disc of Parmesan violets, across the center of which her monogram is worked in wired orange flowers; a gallantry, of course, of Mr. Farintyre's.

"Among social arts, the art of friendship should, I am sure, be reckoned one of the hardest." The forced remark is made after a space of awkward silence. "Evidently I have not learned the rudiments of it. Every friend I have drops away from me. And still, as regards you, Mr. Longmore, I thought in Clarens—"

"Clarens belongs to the past, is forever done with," he interrupts her brusquely. "There is no recollection, Miss Dormer, that a man's will may not, in time, help him to stamp out."

"Do you wish to stamp out the recollection of Clarens? To me that stay at the Hotel Scherer seems something altogether to the good, a few summer days, the thought of which will carry refreshment with it, whatever happens. I could not, if I chose, forget that evening when you and I took a walk in the direction of Glion. Mamma and Mr. Farintyre preferred playing cards by lamplight in the hotel, so we went out alone. You were patient enough, I remember, to give me a lesson in astronomy."

The first evening—when they talked of Arcturus, and chlorophyl, and Beethoven! The evening when, after an hour spent together in the ampler ether, the pale Elysian light, Longmore felt as though he and Joyce Dormer had been acquainted for years. Does he believe, in truth, that this recollection can ever come within the power of will to stamp out?

"And our pleasant afternoons on the terrace, one, especially, when we talked of Werther and Charlotte, and you read the 'Prisoner of Chillon' aloud! And our disastrous expedition to Lord Byron's island! And all the music, a little too much of that, perhaps, to which mamma and I made you listen!"

Joyce's voice is earnest, fraught with sincere and kindly feeling. In her gleam of satin and shimmer of pearls she is looking fair enough to cause the distraction of many a colder-blooded man than Hugh Longmore. But the young

Oxonian's heart beats no quicker. Admiration, reverence for Joyce Dormer, have turned in him to something closely bordering on hatred—hatred, shall we say, in theory? The practical onlooker in these matters may be allowed to doubt the personal aversion of a man of three-and-twenty toward a beautiful girl (however heartless) whose finger-tips rest on his arm, whose breath mingles with his own in the mystic, odorous atmosphere of a Roman night.

"If I wished it, which I do not," she repeats, "I could never, while I live, forget our charming August days in Clarens."

They have by this time, reached an extreme angle of the colonnade. The sounds of horns and fiddles and moving feet come to them faintly. A fountain, lighted by one quivering lamp, plays in the adjacent orange garden: its plash, heard through the darkness, recalls to Hugh Longmore the far-away lap of Lake Geneva, as he heard it in a moment of intoxication, a moment when two cold, little, thyme-scented hands were held abruptly across his face.

"One does not, literally, forget the happiest hours of one's lifetime," he remarks with courage. "But one may learn to look back upon them without the old, mad, crushing regret. That is all I dare trust myself to say, with my present feelings. I can look back without crushing regret upon those too-sweet summer days that I spent in Clarens."

Joyce's fingers quit her companion's arm. She turns from him with a gesture of real pain.

"Everything in my life has got a warp in it. Even you, Mr. Longmore, of whom we know so little, of whom all that we did know was pleasant, have no wish to continue our friend. The Fata Morgana, my mother talks of, is against me, I suppose."

"Is not the Fata Morgana pretty much what we elect to make it?" says Hugh Longmore. "One of us chooses ambition, riches, a balance at his banker's. Another, belonging to a hopeless minority, is so old-fashioned as to prefer love—even although love be accompanied by the bitter disgrace of poverty."

At the tone in which this remark is made Joyce's heart turns sick.

"I believe human beings never understand each other well enough to pronounce hard-and-fast judgments," she answers, almost humbly. "How much, at this hour, does

Mr. Hugh Longmore know of Joyce Dormer? That she plays the violin up to the average of *dilletante* players, has blue eyes, pale hair, a trick of manner—”

He interrupts her with sudden, undisguised passion.

“A trick of manner! Ay, and a low musical voice and a smile—and a pair of white hands! That is all I know, is it not? I am ignorant of Miss Dormer’s depth of feeling, her generosity, her compassion toward the friend who valued her slightest caprice more than his own life, her grief, her tenderness for this friend in his hour of need?”

Joyce stands like one bewildered; Longmore’s words ringing, meaningless, in her ears; that most cruel of all fears, the fear of the unknown, taking vague possession of her.

“You wonder at seeing me in Rome, no doubt? Well, I will confess to you my reason for coming here. Last August an illness fell upon me—no mortal illness, but one that I could not shake off, as men and women of robuster sense are able to do. When I left England, ten days ago, it was with the hope of getting back to health. If I could only see a certain face that haunted me, press a certain hand before it passed forever into another man’s keeping, I felt that my recovery might be quicker. It was horrible weakness,” says the poor lad, pulling himself together with an effort. “My life is not one of dreams, but of work, certainly is not a life in which twenty or thirty pounds can be thrown away, for a whim, on railway traveling. But, even as late as a fortnight ago, I judged of things crookedly. Men blinded by love do not measure the extravagance of their own projects. And you know, Miss Dormer,” in spite of himself Hugh Longmore’s voice trembles with excess of feeling, “I *was* in love—why should I seek to hide it—until—”

“Until?” repeats Joyce mechanically, as he pauses.

“Until I reached Nice,” he answers her, with emphasis. “There my folly was cured, my sight restored to me, but by curiously different means to those upon which I had speculated. From Nice, as you may imagine, I paid a visit to Monte Carlo.”

His tone is significant: a glow of indignation is on his young and honest face. But Joyce betrays no faintest sign of answering consciousness.

“I also went to Monte Carlo once,” she answers simply. “One January evening I took a wild fancy for seeing the

‘professors of the speculative sciences’ at home, and poor mamma was argued into humoring me. It proved an absolute mistake, the worst-spent evening of my life. I never want to see, to think of, the Monte Carlo gambling-tables again.’’

Her quiet self-command, the cold, resigned sadness of her voice, cause Hugh Longmore’s indignation to wax hotter.

“Monte Carlo should be a scene rich in dramatic material, Miss Dormer. At Monte Carlo, if anywhere, the artist nature should be able to play at emotion, should find the ‘stuff’ for inspiration of which you talked to me that night of the storm off Chillon. Surely such an array of lost souls,” exclaims Longmore, “men without honor, women bereft of womanhood, might be the subject-matter for some prettily plaintive song without words — some adagio in a minor key?”

The way in which this is spoken, rather than the speech itself, wounds Joyce like a deserved reproach.

“I am afraid I thought too much of myself to observe others on that unfortunate evening. I was full of trouble. There was no need for me to play at emotion or search for dramatic ‘stuff.’ Looking back on it all now, the crowd of faces round the tables seem hardly distincter than the background of a bad dream.”

“Still, although you did not see, you must have heard,” goes on Longmore, with persistence. “A child could not visit Monte Carlo and remain innocently obtuse to Monte Carlo realities. Why, the stories of the suicides alone, Miss Dormer— did they not touch you?”

“I heard no such stories. I was selfishly absorbed in my own thoughts during the whole of our stay in Nice.”

“Yet their numbers are legion. Two nights before I was at Monte Carlo,” proceeds Longmore, still narrowly watching his companion’s face, “some miserable creature blew his brains out, as he sat at one of the trente-et-quarante tables. For a little moment the play stopped. Then the attendants carried out the poor wretch’s body, and the croupiers went on with their work of shuffling and cutting. What was the first impulse among the crowd of gamblers? —to speculate, perhaps, as to whether the dead man had left parents, a wife, children? Not a bit of it. Before the body was well outside the *salle* four or five persons were

quarreling over the chair on which the suicide sat, believing that to secure it, the victim's blood literally upon their hands, would bring them luck."

"The world overpowers us," cries Joyce, her cheeks turning white with horror. "We are too heavily weighted, each of us, secretly, to think as we should of the burdens of others."

"Except in an artistic spirit," says young Longmore. "An artist, stooping to conquer inspiration might 'batter himself into sympathy'—who was it invented that charming phrase?—even over the nameless graves that fill a corner in the Nice burying-ground. You must have heard something about the Frenchman who hung himself at the Hotel Printemps? That was in January, a short time, as far as I could make out, before Mrs. and Miss Dormer started for Rome."

Joyce Dormer shudders.

"You are determined that I shall sup full on horrors, Mr. Longmore. If my poor mother, with her distaste for the sensational, could hear our talk!"

"Mrs. Dormer must find that the sensational forces itself occasionally upon her notice."

"When it does, mamma contrives to poetize facts. Never was a human soul so apt to discover the silver lining in all clouds as hers."

"A wise optimism. I am brought back to my unfinished story. The landlord of the Hotel Printemps was a philosopher bent upon seeing the brightest, best-paying aspect of the most tragic events. 'Thank Heaven, Monsieur de Morigny chose a long cord.' Such were his reported words when they broke into the dead man's room next morning. And every gambler in the neighborhood rushed to buy a little morsel of the rope—the surest of all talismans to carry with them to the tables. Next in interest to the suicides, I fancy, come the duels."

Longmore pronounces the word with slow emphasis, then stops short, his glance riveted on Joyce's face.

She has turned so that the lamp beside the fountain streams on her full. He can see that her color deepens not, that her blue eyes give back his gaze with perfect steadiness.

"I thought duels had gone out of fashion, were only fought nowadays by Parisian editors over political articles,

or well-padded German students who have exchanged a '*dummer Bube!*' in the street. Men go to Monte Carlo, I have heard, to win fortunes and stay to lose them. Do they quarrel with old Madame Blanc—she still lives, does she not?—or with the croupiers, or between themselves?"

"Surely that is an unnecessary question for you to ask!"

"Unnecessary?"

"You can not have forgotten the event which was the talk of all Nice no longer ago than last January?"

Joyce moves uneasily away. She believes, on Lady Joan Majendie's showing, that Roger Tryan is in Corsica; that her dream in Pisa, her vision of a haggard face in the Sistine, were phantoms—the result of faulty assimilation, of an anæmic brain! And still, although no faintest suspicion of the truth has dawned upon her, she feels ill at rest; conscious that if Longmore has heard so much Monte Carlo news he must have heard more of Roger, possibly of Roger's relations with Major and Mrs. Pinto, than he may choose to admit.

"I am afraid mamma and I are scandalously indifferent to gossip. We hear of startling events about six months after other people have grown tired of discussing them. With the exception of those hurried days in Nice our winter was spent in solitude. Latterly—I mean," adds Joyce, recollecting herself, "before Mr. Farintyre arrived in Rome—I have had no thought for anything but my music. If time had been longer," she goes on, after a little silence, "I should like to have had your opinion on my work. I am dabbling in composition still."

"The last of your '*Songs without Words*,' I remember, was to be called '*Shipwreck*.' When I met you in Clarens your sympathy was still with the people who commit fiascoes. Mrs. Dormer's advice has, of course, prevailed. After the stereotyped andante movement, a discursive minor passage or two, you have ended everything cheerfully in the resumption of the major key?"

"The song has grown out of all proportions, and is more desparately mournful than ever. You recollect the story about Paganini's violin—how it was said that the virtuoso had killed his mother, and that her soul used to speak to him through the strings? The soul of something dead has been speaking to me, here, in Rome, through the strings of my Stradivarius."

“And what,” asks Longmore, staggered by her calmness, “is to be the title of this new inspiration, this translation into words of a voice from the dead?”

“Oh, I am constant to old names. The song shall be called ‘Shipwreck,’ if the time ever comes when it is rightly finished. During the past week or two,” she adds, with a sigh, “I have begun to think that my musical days are numbered. My life would be more in tune if I were to lay my Stradivarius on a shelf, send it, perhaps, as an addition to the old violins at South Kensington, and never play, never compose another note.”

The sincerity of Joyce’s voice is not to be questioned. Callous, worldly, devoid of pitying womanly kindness though Longmore believe her, he can with difficulty remain untouched before the pathos of her self-contempt.

“Such a course might be a prudent one,” he remarks presently. “If sweet sound, as men say, be the great awakener of memory, it may be well for one’s peace, Miss Dormer, when the past is somewhat dark, to let sweet sound go.”

“Yes, I feel that, only too keenly,” cries the poor girl, ignorant of his meaning. “Still, music reminds me, often, that my memory is inconveniently good, and then—then I turn coward, ready to say, ‘sufficient for the day is the frivolity thereof,’ to live the life of the world, and put aside all the hopes of excellence I once had forever.”

“To look for the silver—perhaps one might fitly say the golden—lining to the cloud. Admirable philosophy!”

“No true inborn artist could ever turn coward. True artists must wish to keep memory alive, no matter at what cost of happiness, must be willing to endure the acutest suffering, so long as it brought out the best expression of the best feeling that was in them.”

Then Joyce is silent; her face downbent in transparent half shadow, her clasped arms resting, with the grace that informs her smallest movement, upon the rose-twined marble balustrade. Far away, the fiddles and horns clang merrily; here, at hand, is the soft plash of the fountain. Across the garden, rise the dim outlines of sleeping Rome. Faint streaks of dying moonlight linger upon the far horizon. The portents of coming storm lower overhead.

A question from Longmore breaks the stillness with

startling abruptness—a question whose solid prose sends all the fairy, external poetry of the moment to the winds.

“Is the report now current in Rome a true one, Miss Dormer? Is an exceedingly gay wedding to take place at the British Embassy the end of this week?”

Joyce colors violently.

“‘Exceedingly gay’ is a strong expression. All wedding rejoicings are, to my mind, mistakes. But one must go with the crowd. I need not say, Mr. Longmore, that I and my mother would wish to see you among our guests on Saturday.”

“Mrs. Dormer did not look to-night as though she would wish to see me anywhere— Naturally enough,” adds Longmore, after a moment’s embarrassed hesitation. “Mrs. Dormer guesses, doubtless, that I passed through Nice on my way to Rome. The sight of me may have awakened tragic remembrances that were better allowed to slumber.”

As he speaks—yes, before his words are fairly uttered—a suspicion, horribly intense, even in its dimness, has shot through Joyce’s brain.

“What dark mystery is this you hint at, Mr. Longmore? Do you know more than you care to say to me, openly? What tragic reminiscences has my poor little mother? How can it concern her that you happened to pass through Nice on your road to Italy?”

“Simply because Nice lies close to Monte Carlo, that men’s tongues have not ceased speaking—Miss Dormer, if you insist”—for she has drawn close, in her agony of fear has rested her hand upon his arm. She looks up, with piteous eagerness, in his face—“if you insist upon the truth, men speak still of the misfortune of a very old friend of yours.”

“Go on; I am in the dark. You torture me by your slowness. Do you mean that mamma can have tragic reminiscences of—of—?”

But here speech fails her. Joyce Dormer’s white and trembling lips will not shape themselves into uttering Roger’s name.

“Of Mr. Tryan,” says Longmore quietly. “There can be no need, surely, to enlarge upon the subject. I hint only,” he adds, “at that which the whole world knows—the unhappy quarrel into which Roger Tryan was forced

with a certain notorious Count Zecca, twenty-four hours before Mrs. and Miss Dormer quitted Nice.”

CHAPTER XIV.

ESCAPE.

DURING some seconds of time Joyce is speechless; her hand, rigidly clasped on young Hugh Longmore's arm, trembles not. All she can realize is—that the external world has grown dark and narrow around her; that she has been deceived; that if Tryan be *dead*, she will seek out his grave, press her lips to the cold earth that covers him, and so, peacefully die, and be with him, and away from John Farintyre (in this supremest moment she can think of that)—away from John Farintyre for evermore!

“If you would have the kindness to tell me all you know.” So, at length she speaks—can these indistinct, husky accents be Joyce Dormer's? “The news, you see, has come a little suddenly. Mamma must have kept things back from me, for the best, of course. My mother could only have acted for the best—she is over-watchful, she exaggerates my weakness! But I am quite strong. I can bear more than mamma would think. I ask, Mr. Longmore, to be told all you know.”

Is she acting a part with finished delicacy, throughout, or is this nature? Flying to the extreme of skepticism, after the manner of most very young men in whom belief has been newly shattered, Longmore, for a few more mistaken minutes, believes her to be acting. Poor in purse, insignificant in position, he, Hugh Longmore, is still a quandam worshiper, and Joyce Dormer will not show in her true colors, in her unwomanly heartlessness, before him. The goddess would fain remain on her pedestal, the coquette retain her hold upon her victim's respect, to the last.

“I know no more, Miss Dormer, than what the idle Nice world commonly talks of. Two English ladies, friends, in his palmier days, of poor Tryan's, went over to Monte Carlo one evening in January last—prompted, who shall say by what caprice? After watching the play for awhile the younger of the ladies was seen to leave the rooms on Tryan's arm. What had gone before, the exact

circumstances which brought him into a quarrel with Zecca, are unknown—it might be juster to say are known only to the principal actors in the drama. The facts that followed were such as all the gossiping tongues in Nice could neither add to nor gainsay. Count Zecca is a shamefully notorious duelist. You have heard his sobriquet of course? ‘The Monte Carlo Fitz-Gerald.’”

A stifled assent bursts from the girl’s overcharged heart.

“A gentleman whose hands are as clever in the use of the sword or pistol as in the packing of cards or cogging of dice. A scoundrel,” says Longmore hotly, “down to the ground! Well, it was a boast of Count Zecca’s that he got over his affairs ‘of honor’ quickly, liked to send his challenge and have his man neatly finished within the twelve hours. He did so now. Soon after sunrise next morning, Roger Tryan was quixotic enough to give this professional murderer a meeting. They exchanged shots just outside the territory of Monte Carlo. Tryan fired in the air. Count Zecca took his usual scientific aim—and his victim fell! That, I believe,” the words are spoken with emphasis, “was the day before Mrs. Dormer and yourself started for Rome.”

Joyce is colorless as the marble pillar at her side. Abandoning Longmore’s arm, she stands with hands clinched, with features shrunk and livid. No sound passes her pale lips. Tears, the capacity of ever shedding tears again, seem frozen in her horror-stricken, dilated eyes.

With a strained, automatic gasp, speech at length escapes her.

“I am rightly punished—my first falseness has borne its fruit! And to think that I never went to him, never wrote a word, I who—ah, if I had known, if I had not been cruelly deceived, do you suppose,” cries Joyce, with an impulse of fierce self-disdain, “that I should be here, dressed as I am, merry-making, dancing?”

Impossible to doubt the white anguish of her face, her voice’s passionate despair.

“It was not my place to speak to you of this,” cries Longmore, moved almost to compunction. “If wrong has been committed, it is irrevocable. The past is past.”

“But the future—do you tell me *that* can not be changed?” Joyce asks wildly. “Am I not—God be

thanked—my own mistress still? Oh, I see things clearly now,” she exclaims, as remembrance after remembrance, each in itself a moral proof, crowds on her excited brain: her dream in Pisa, the voice from the dead that has forever pursued her in Rome, the specter face at the Sistine chapel—all the symptoms of nervous instability that quinine and iron were to set right. “I have had warnings enough, and I turned from them. I have allowed myself, like a fool, to be led blindfold, and now—Mr. Longmore, have pity on me! Do not say that the past is past, that wrong, however great, may not be undone!”

She stretches forth her hands, she totters an uncertain step or two in the direction of the ball-room; then colonnade, and garden, and outlines of sleeping Rome, whirl round before Joyce’s sight; the fountain is silent; horns and fiddles and bassoons cease to play. The timely support of her companion’s arm alone keeps her from falling.

Longmore leads, almost carries, the girl to a low stone bench in the outer air. He steeps her handkerchief in the cool water of the basin and presses it to her forehead.

“I did not know I was so weak.” So, as she rallies from her swoon, Joyce begins to murmur. “Weak, at the moment when I need strength as I never needed it before!”

“Your absence will not have been noticed, Miss Dormer. Rest here until your faintness passes, and when you return to the ball-room—”

“I shall go away from this place and from Rome,” she exclaims, rising with a convulsed effort to her feet. “A train leaves for the north at day-break, and I shall start by it. Yes, I mean to leave my mother and all of them, to go where, perhaps, I may still be of a little use. You will help me, will you not? I look to you, Mr. Longmore, as to the one person in Rome who can befriend me. You will help me to start upon my journey, if—ah Heaven,” she cries, her voice sinking under the terror of the thought, “if it be not too late!”

The moment is critical. As Joyce Dormer’s stern, self-elected judge, young Longmore knew that every approach to his heart was frozen. In this altered, dangerous post of consoler he finds his stoicism melting like snow beneath an April sun.

“It is not too late,” he answers, under his breath.

“Roger Tryan lives.” For a second it seems as though Joyce would fall upon his neck at the tidings. “More than this, Roger Tryan has progressed so far along the road to recovery that, a week ago, he left Nice, against the doctor’s advice, for Rome.”

“For Rome?” she echoes, with a return of natural color, with tears at last softening the wild horror of her eyes. “Roger Tryan is here, and you have been all this time breaking the news to me. He is stronger—well, then, is getting back to his strength? I shall be able to see him to-morrow, early? Oh, Mr. Longmore, answer me. If you knew how terrible it is to be kept in this uncertainty.”

And Longmore obeys: strengthening the story he has to tell by no cruel, unnecessary detail, but extenuating nothing, tinting nothing in rose-color. On the first day after his arrival in Nice it chanced that the late Monte Carlo scandal was discussed among a party of Englishmen at the *table d’hôte*. From their talk Longmore gathered that Zecca, immediately after the duel, had taken flight—it was supposed had joined a certain Major and Mrs. Pinto in Corsica; that Roger Tryan, still weak from his wound, was staying, alone and unattended, on an upper floor of this very hotel. Longmore’s window opened upon a terrace where the invalid was accustomed to walk feebly to and fro in the morning sun. By the end of four-and-twenty hours an acquaintance was struck up between them, and—

“Ah, I can imagine the rest!” cries Joyce, a crimson flush overspreading her excited face. “In his weakness, his loneliness, you became Roger Tryan’s friend! You heard from his own lips the history of that miserable quarrel and its cause. You heard how mamma and I left Nice. No wonder you had learned to hate, to despise me! No wonder you almost refused to hold out your hand when we met to-night.”

“Do not make me more ashamed than I feel already, Miss Dormer, of my own barbarism. From Roger Tryan I heard less of his affairs than from every other person to whom I spoke in the hotel. Once, I know, on my pressing him, he said that the cause of the duel was a stupid collision that took place beside the *trente-et-quarante* table, a collision that a fire-eater like Zecca was safe to construe into insult. ‘If I had had a grain of sense,’ said poor

Tryan, in that pleasant, half-jesting voice of his—you remember it?"

Yes, Joyce Dormer remembers.

"—I should have started for Paris, England, anywhere beyond the Monaco territory, as soon as I saw what mess I had fallen into. But I have been consistently unwise, all my life," Tryan added. "I remained, and, while Count Zecca's sense of honor is satisfied, have no worse crime than folly resting on my conscience."

"And he made no allusion to us? Roger Tryan never spoke to you of our conduct?"

"The names of Mrs. Dormer and yourself were first mentioned to me, the day before I left. Then—"

"You need not revise your words, Mr. Longmore. Then?"

"I told Tryan that I had an object in reaching Rome by an early date. I also told him—on the authority of a paragraph in 'Galignani'—that the marriage of John Farintyre and Miss Joyce Dormer was fixed for the Saturday in Easter week."

Joyce moves a restless pace or two away. She looks forth, with blank, unnoticing gaze, upon the dusky orange groves, the panorama of leaden gray domes and roofs and cupolas that lies beyond.

"And that evening, half an hour after I had spoken to him of you, Tryan announced his resolve of traveling on to Italy, at once. It was useless to talk of prudence—useless for the surgeon to command. He wanted Southern air and sunshine, wanted to get away from all the sorry associations of his illness and of Monte Carlo. In a word, Miss Dormer, he wanted to reach Rome, as many days as might be before the Saturday in Easter week! To order an invalid *coupé*, to see that he traveled with a minimum of risk and fatigue, was all Roger Tryan's friends could do for him."

"And he arrived in Rome—when?"

As she asks this, a pang of cruelest compunction goes through Joyce Dormer's heart. Must not Roger, ill in spirit and body, have watched her during the driving and sight-seeing of the last busy fortnight? Must he not have seen her in the Borghese gardens, on the Pincian Hill, in all the gayest haunts of Rome, untroubled, to outward

seeming, by regret or remorse, with John Farintyre by her side?

“Mr. Tryan reached Rome the middle of last week. He traveled direct. I took the longer route by Florence. If all had gone well, the plan was that we should meet here, at the Hotel Washington, on the night of Easter Monday.”

“If! Speak to me of things as they are, not as they prettily might have been,” cries Joyce, with the impatience of a woman whose heart prophesies some evil thing she shrinks from hearing. “What do you mean by ‘if’? You followed Mr. Tryan to Rome—you found him making progress, stronger for the change? Oh, it is cruel, cruel to keep me in such suspense! It is impossible that you can have any further ill news to tell me!”

Longmore turns his eyes away in pity from her face.

“I have to tell the truth, by your own command,” he answers, “and the truth is that Roger Tryan does not make progress. He bore the journey well—so much I have gathered from some of the English-speaking people at the Washington—but once in Rome, refused to put himself in the doctor’s hands, or to take the commonest care as to his hours of going out or coming in. You must know the dangers of Roman air, Miss Dormer, even for persons in health. To a man weak from recent loss of blood—”

“Be quicker!” she exclaims, with a gesture of agonized impatience. “Let me know the worst you have to tell.”

“Roger Tryan went on Friday to the service of the Sistine Chapel.”

Where Joyce saw him; no hallucination of the anæmic brain, but her old lover in the flesh; her old lover—haggard, hollow-eyed, as he watched her at the side of the lover of to-day!

“He came back to his hotel, faint and worn-out, toward midnight, and next morning was down with malarial fever. The poor fellow is well looked after. Dr. Byrne, one of the first Roman physicians, visits him. He is nursed by a sister of the Bon Secours. But his strength, Miss Dormer, is not good.”

“I understand you. Go on.”

“If we could learn the address of his relations in England—Dr. Byrne thinks some one belonging to him should be telegraphed for at once.”

"Some one belonging to him!" Joyce Dormer repeats the words mechanically. She stands, as though numbed by the violence of this final blow. The lamp-light falls in waves of roseate light upon her silks and laces, upon the jewels in her hair. Tinkle, tinkle go the violins and horns to which the gay Roman world is dancing—the gay Roman world, bidden next Saturday to the celebrating of her own wedding-feast!

After a long silence she turns slowly round toward Longmore. She rests a hand that no longer trembles on his arm.

"Will you do something very good-natured for me, Mr. Longmore? Help me to get back, with as little notice as may be, through the ball-room. I am going at once home to my mother's lodging, and then on to Mr. Tryan's hotel. I must see his nurse, find out—rather late in the day, but never mind that—if I can be of use."

"I am afraid you can do little for him, dear Miss Dormer," says Longmore, with grave kindness. "The landlord of the Washington, frightened out of his wits, like all these Romans, at the thought of their own fever, had the poor fellow carried at once to a lodging. He is quiet there, the doctor says, and well nursed. You would only run useless risk by going to him—doubtful, indeed, if Tryan is any longer in a condition to recognize you."

"I shall recognize him," Joyce Dormer answers, simply, calmly, as though they discussed some matter of everyday interest. "As to risk—even supposing Roman fever to be contagious—is life so sweet that one should set a miserly store by it? No, Mr. Longmore, no." She adds this with the shadowy reflection of a smile. "I may not even have the consolation, now or hereafter, of imagining myself a heroine. I am commonplace, as I have always been, through and through."

Longmore gives here his arm without another word. A tumultuous galop is just now in course of execution; and the din of the dance-music, the sea of whirling human *fantoccini* come to Joyce's aid. Unseen of watchful mother or jealous sweetheart, they tide safely through the ball-room into harbor of a vestibule, a dimly lit retreat, where only a few engrossed, unobservant couples are whispering in exotic-bowered corners. A short space more, three or four apartments quickly passed through, and escape

—Joyce's overstrained heart beats freer at the thought—is assured.

CHAPTER XV.

THROUGH ROME AT MIDNIGHT.

“HERE, then, Miss Dormer, I will wait for you,” says Longmore, when they reach the bottom of the central staircase. “Or, while you go to the cloak-room for your wraps, shall I see what prospect there is of finding a carriage outside?”

“I need no wraps,” Joyce answers firmly. “My mother is in possession of the cloak-room ticket, and I will not leave your arm, Mr. Longmore, or run the chance of delay now that I have got so far. Night air? Oh, I am proof against it. Surely you remember enough of our Chillon adventures to know that cold and wet do not harm me!”

And then, attracting looks of blank wonder from such lackeys, gentlemen's gentlemen, and other idlers as chance to be hanging about the entrance door, they walk forth together, Lochinvar fashion, into the open air.

No charger stands near. Not a vehicle, public or private, is to be seen.

The earliest carriages are ordered to be in the Piazza Barberini at one o'clock; and it is not yet midnight. The sky has grown blacker during the past ten minutes. The wind is sharp; charged, too, with a Campagna mist, fast turning into a steady downpour of rain. And Joyce is in satin and gauze. Her arms are bare to the shoulder, her throat is uncovered. Ere she has taken a dozen steps, her trailing skirts, her silken dancing-shoes, are soddened through by the wet and defilement of the Roman pavement. Turn back? Nay. After the ball-room's heat it must do them both good to breathe this quickened air. Such is her answer to young Hugh Longmore's expostulations. The rain, the cold, the absence of human faces, are a refreshment. Turn back for shelter—send a servant for a carriage? No, a thousand times no. Who can tell, her voice trembling with excitement as she speaks, what even five minutes' loss of time might involve?

And, clinging fast to Longmore's arm, gathering her ruined ball-room draperies round her as best she can, Joyce struggles on.

They make their way along the Piazza Barberini, as heedless of the weather as of the *per Baccho!* that proceeds from every cloaked and muffled Roman who comes across them in the darkness, then turning short to the right, strike into the Via Felice and so obliquely gain the Trinità di Monti. From the Trinità they must run—wade, rather—across the flooded Piazza di Spagna, the rain, by this time, rushing as only Roman rain can, down all the hills and sloping roofs of the city. A few minutes later—thirty yards of a narrow, lava-paved street swiftly traversed, a *portiere* rudely wakened from his sleep—and they are ascending the tumble-down marble steps of the *palazzo* in which Mrs. Dormer lodges.

Silence reigns throughout the building; a solitary oil lamp burns in the entrance hall. On reaching the third floor, Hugh Longmore, at Joyce's bidding, hammers with muscle upon the sixteenth-century knocker which serves for the different suites of apartments on the *loggia*, calling forth by his blows a very legion of echoes from all quarters of the *palazzo*. After a time, chinks of light stream through a neighboring hinge; a frightened "Lor' bless me!" is breathed, in unmistakable British accents, from out a half-opened door. And then Mistress Smart, the fine, newly hired London waiting-woman, enters upon the scene.

Need I describe how that waiting-woman's brow elevates at the spectacle presented to her? Miss Joyce Dormer, her mistress, *in posse, sans* hood and mantle, with brilliant Parisian braveries limp and disheveled, with satin shoes the color of the streets; a young man (not Mr. Farintyre) in evening attire, white-tied, lavender-gloved, a man, also bare-headed, and also limp and disheveled, for Miss Joyce Dormer's sole escort!

Smart has waited ere this in families dating from the Conqueror. When the necessity of an abigail first became manifest, it was Mrs. Dormer's harmless pride to secure one direct—yes, with the very bloom on—from the stormy service of the just-buried old Countess of Wendover. Smart has perused many unwritten editions of the lives of the great. She knows that queer family discussions arise, even among persons of Norman blood; is broken in to more duties than those of hair-dressing and millinery; has learned when to speak, when to be silent. The pres-

ent experience is new to her. Never, in Smart's recollections, was the great eleventh commandment so openly set at naught. Never did the most dramatically rebellious heroine perambulate city roads, cold, wet, bare-headed, in dancing-slippers, with insufficient chaperonage, at midnight.

The proprieties are outraged. With elevated brow, Smart purrs forth respectful surprise—semi-admonitory.

"Miss Dormer—ma'am! which I hope nothing serious has happened to your mamma, or—"

"Nothing serious has happened to mamma, or to any one," Joyce cuts her on the instant short. Then turning hurriedly to Longmore: "It seems forced upon me always to treat you with scanty ceremony," the girl whispers. "That night in Clarens when I owed my life to your courage I left you—about as drenched as you are now—outside the door of my mother's room. I am about to show my usual gratitude, ask you to sally forth again into the wet and darkness of the streets."

"I know. I understand exactly what you mean," is Longmore's answer. "You wish me to go back, straight to the Palazzo Orsini, break the bad news to Mrs. Dormer and Farintyre, then—"

"I wish you, while I am putting on my cloak and hat, to look for a *vettura*. Afterward, I shall ask you to drive with me to Roger Tryan's lodging. You know the address?"

"Dr. Byrne wrote it down before I left him." Longmore takes a card from his breast-pocket and reads aloud: "Seventy-three, Via Nono, a small street close to the Monte Giordano!"

"We have not a moment to lose. Turn to your right on leaving the house, and the next bend of the street will bring you into the Corso. Even in this weather, at this hour, conveyances of some kind are likely to be passing there."

A shake of the hand is exchanged between them—a mute ratification of their almost forfeited friendship. Then, Hugh Longmore's figure having vanished down the black well of staircase, Joyce takes a chamber-lamp from Smart's agitated clasp, and makes her way through the salon to her own room.

True daughter of Eve, she flies, even in this hour's

agony, to her looking-glass. With a mingled feeling, partly horror, partly compassion, she examines the image her looking-glass presents to her.

Joyce Dormer—by the world called a spoiler of men's peace, an empress over men's hearts: *this*, then, is what an hour's remorse, a ball-room repentance, a little bodily cold and tiredness, have brought her to! Which of her suitors, she thinks, with the spirit of self-torture that at such moments trenches so nearly upon humor—which of her suitors would be faithful if he could see her now?

For her beauty—at all times the perfection of grace, expression, youthful winsomeness, rather than of feature—is, in truth, beauty to fade, as it blossoms, in a breath. At this moment, the oval of her face drawn and exaggerated, her blue eyes wide and pale, her lips bloodless, her delicate hair soddened by the rain, Joyce Dormer looks a specter, a wreck of her old self (there is bitter sweetness in the feeling), on which any one who knew her formerly must look with aversion, however much that aversion were tempered with pity.

What a contrast to her moral despair, her physical uncomeliness, are the heaps of costly toys, fresh from jeweler and modiste, with which her room is strewn; the livery of the bondage into which she had so nearly sold herself, and that was to have been paid for next Saturday—at the price, only of a human soul!

Next Saturday—

With feverish haste, Joyce Dormer exchanges silken trains, Parisian furbelows, for a close-fitting black stuff gown—chosen, you may be sure, from Joyce Dormer's modest wardrobe, not from the overflowing trousseau of the future bride. Then she gathers together every present of worth that she has forced herself to accept from John Farintyre, makes them into a parcel, which she directs to him, and leaves conspicuously placed on the center of her dressing-table. And then, mastering her repugnance for the task with strenuous efforts, she brings her hand to write a few words of farewell to Mrs. Dormer. Words of wild rebellion—twenty-one years of love, reverence, duty, turned suddenly to madness! Words such as, I hope, few of us who have children will ever merit should be written to ourselves!

Reverence? Has Mrs. Dormer revered *her* best, be-

cause her most natural, human feeling? Duty! Was it dutiful to let her believe Roger Tryan untrue, to let her flaunt her heartlessness as a virtue, show herself publicly before men's gaze with Farintyre at the very time when Roger Tryan's voice, in its last fluttering anguish, might be vainly calling on her name?

"I have heard the truth, mother. I understand the paragraph in the newspaper, the dream I had in Pisa, as you must have understood both, at the time. And I am doing that which you and I, together, ought to have done in Nice. I am going as a nurse to Roger Tryan to-night. He followed us to Rome, last week. You knew that, also, of course? You knew that it was Roger's face, not a phantom of my own brain, that I saw in the Sistine chapel? Perhaps you have not heard that he has been struck down by Roman fever, is alone, dying. I must ask you to give Mr. Farintyre back his presents, and say that everything from this hour is over between us.

"How am I to forgive the wrong that has been done to Roger and to me? There is no forgiveness—only hardness and despair in my heart.

"JOYCE."

When the bedroom door at length opens and Joyce Dormer walks forth, storm-clad, in somber hat and veil, ready for her enterprise, Mrs. Smart, who, in the interval, has kept discreet vigil beside the keyhole, fairly starts from her post.

"You are looking shockingly pale, ma'am, and the weather grows worse and worse. Mr. Farintyre's courier has told me that these cut-throat foreign places are never safe after midnight—I do trust, Miss Dormer, you have no intentions of venturing out?"

Smart is a tall, upright woman, of juvenile middle age. Her voice is pitched at a constant and suggestive stage whisper; her manner of folding her hands is sleek; her eyes do not permit themselves the liberty of looking higher than her interlocutor's chin. Aggressive respectability, the very pink of Servants' Hall Philistinism, reside in her Oxford Street mob-cap, her Oxford Street brooch and chain, in every bristling fold of her Oxford Street black silk dress.

Joyce shrinks, like one mortally struck, from the tone of

unctuous remonstrance. This woman's presence brings before her all that in her soul's passionate revolt it is death to remember—money, jewels, milliners, marriage-settlements, traveling-cases, and the name that was to have been hers, till the grave should part her from it, next Saturday.

“I am sure, ma'am, Mr. Farintyre would be apprehensive—Mrs. Dormer would not think it prudent for you to venture out—”

So, with suave intonation, Smart is once more beginning.

“Mr. Farintyre's apprehensions will soon lessen,” interrupts Joyce, a queer, frozen sort of smile upon her lips, “and Mrs. Dormer knows my liking for bad weather! I have been summoned to attend a friend who lies, here in Rome, sick unto death. You will repeat that, if you please, when they return. My mother, I have no doubt, missed me from the ball-room, and Mr. Farintyre will be likely to bring her home. Say, simply, that I have been called to the bedside of a dying friend, and give mamma a note and parcel that you will find upon my dressing-table.”

“If it is your wish that I should accompany you, Miss Dormer, I will do so, of course. I was sent out here in the dark, as one may say—the agency offices are *that* inaccurate!” The woman glances round, with a sniff of disapproval, at Mrs. Dormer's artistic salon—a barely furnished vault, as seen by Smart's London-trained eyes; scagliolo floor, majolica tiles, *cinque-cento* carving, and nineteenth-century cobwebs, all valued together at zero. “I never thought that duties out of the ordinary would be required of me. Still, if a fellow-creature is lying ill, I hope I know my Christian obligations. In the Earl of Wendover's service, our chaplain used to say—”

Joyce turns away with a scarce-suppressed movement of impatience. Hastily pushing open the salon door, she crosses a tiled corridor that runs along the entire length of the third story; then, bending over the worm-eaten oaken balustrade, gazes down into the darkness of the stairs, and listens intently.

No sound save the vague moans and creakings of old age is to be heard throughout the *palazzo*. Not a footfall disturbs the quiet of the narrow street, outside. The city's very heart seems sleeping fast. Abruptly, as Joyce waits,

her brain on fire, her pulses beating fever-quick, one o'clock—proclaimed, clear and ghostly, from three hundred Roman Church tongues—brings home to her the need of instant action. One is the hour for which their carriage was ordered at the Palazzo Orsini. Another ten minutes, and Mrs. Dormer may be here; cool, collected, *unscrupulous*, thinks Joyce, with harsh, newly awakened bitterness, as to the nature of a *coup d'état*, so long as the *coup* promises success, and lies conveniently near at hand.

Joyce Dormer turns sick at the thought. She resolves, desperately, to start on foot, alone, in search of Tryan's lodging in that unknown and distant Via Nono. Her hand has grasped the wall-rope; she is just nerving herself to brave the dusky abyss of staircase when the sound of wheels comes, with a rush, along the uneven lava pavement of the Strada della Croce. The wheels stop, the outer bell is pulled vigorously. There follows a brief silence—the *portiere* once more reluctantly shuffling off the coil of sleep; then the street door's rusty hinges give a groan, and young Longmore, three steps at a time, runs up the stair.

"I have been successful, Miss Dormer—by a minglement of bribes and threats have turned aside a *vettura* on its way to the Orsini ball. But you must not lose a moment," Longmore adds breathlessly. "The driver, as far as I can make out his Italian, declares that he will give me possession for half an hour at the longest. Are you ready?"

"Ready—ay, long ago."

Joyce Dormer's answer is given promptly; but Joyce herself does not move. She clasps her hands, with a gesture of pained uncertainty, across her forehead.

"Something has been forgotten, Mr. Longmore. Something that I ought to do is left undone. Wait for me a little moment," she exclaims. "Let me try to collect my thoughts."

The waiting-woman upon this draws near, her step dignified, her face melting in the direction of humanity.

"Was there anything I could get for you, ma'am? A hextra shawl, perhaps—an umbrella? Or"—alas, poor Smart, making, according to her lights, a last clutch at the sacred ensigns of sham!—"would you wish me to accompany you and—and this gentleman?"

For several seconds longer Joyce stands in the same atti-

tude of stunned bewilderment. At length a look of relief passes across her ashen face.

“I have remembered. Go down quickly, Mr. Longmore. Take forcible possession of the *vettura* and wait for me. I shall be at the house door almost as soon as you are.”

She turns back, and for a minute or two searches in the darkened salon. Then such a fraction of a soul as Smart possesses is further shaken by a new experience. Her young mistress, the rich Mrs. Farintyre of the future, not content with going forth, poorly dressed, on a questionable errand of mercy at midnight, but must carry “that shabby old fiddle of hers,” in its shabbier case, between her arms! Even Longmore is conscious of a certain shock when Joyce comes down the stairs to him thus laden. He is seized by a sense of the incongruous—a sense which, to young readers of human motive, turns the pathetic ever with such fatal ease to bathos!

“I see what duty was left undone. The ruling passion, Miss Dormer, strong in death. Nero played while Rome burned.”

But Joyce is too merged in the reality of pain to be jealous over possible misinterpretation of her conduct.

“Have you forgotten that I am bound by a promise? Did I not tell you once, in Clarens, from whom my violin came, and how? I have promised never to part from Stradivarius while I live. Judge if I could be guilty of breaking my word to-night.”

They enter the *vettura* as she speaks; disjointed expostulations still audible from Smart, who, lamp in hand, is following them down the staircase. Then the *conduttore*, with a shake of the reins, urges his dripping horses into a gallop, and away over the stones, the rattle of the wheels echoing weirdly along the narrow street, the fugitives start.

Small margin, in truth, was there for irresolution or delay. As they rush round the first corner with a swing, the *vettura* narrowly escapes collision with an English-looking, pseudo-private brougham, returning at decorous pace from the direction of the Palazzo Orsini. The light from a neighboring street-lamp flickers upon the near window of the brougham and displays the figure of a lady seated inside in evening dress. Another instant, both *conduttori* having brought their horses to a stand-still, and Joyce recognizes

her mother, calm, sweet, youthful-looking, in a white opera-cloak, and with the most bewitching, little rose-lined hood above her head.

A silhouette of John Farintyre, with lowering brow and set lip, is discernible in the shadow at Mrs. Dormer's side.

CHAPTER XVI.

ROGER TRYAN'S LODGING.

A FEELING almost of ecstasy thrills through Joyce's miserable heart.

She is free, at least; has escaped *that* bondage; will never blush again for Farintyre's want of brain, never listen to his praises of Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity, be wounded by his pride of purse, humiliated by his gorgeous gifts. With the ready grasp of detail which is at once the crown and the curse of over-imaginative people, she falls to conjuring up each successive external item of the position; pictures the scene that, ere another quarter strikes, will be at its height in the salon of her mother's apartment; listens to Smart as, upright and rustling, that majestic personage answers under a cross-fire of questioning. "Gone! Yes, indeed, ma'am, notwithstanding all that she, Smart, could urge, in one of these hack carriages, with only a young gentleman for company. Summoned to the bedside of a dear friend, sick unto death." Upon this melodramatic part of the story the woman would be sure to dwell. "And here are a packet and a letter Miss Dormer solemnly bade her deliver. In the Earl of Wendover's service, ma'am, our chaplain used to say—"

Joyce sees his own discarded jewels in Farintyre's big hands, shivers at his outburst of rage, watches the expression of Mrs. Dormer's lips as, courteous, self-possessed (Joyce can never think of her mother otherwise than thus), she clothes the situation in such poor robes of platitude as come within reach. For ether there is neither place nor scope. Ether is a weapon of attack; belongs to a time when concession from strong antagonists may still be possible. But, though one fall, it shall be with grace! The Farintyre money will still exist as a power in the world, notwithstanding a madcap daughter's rejection of it. Let us part from the owner of money with a dewy eyelash, with

murmured hopes of meeting under happier auspices—if Mr. Farintyre can show fine spirit, *generosity* enough, to accept one, still, as an acquaintance?

What, according to doll moralities, is the fate of wedding presents when weddings are broken off? Joyce asks herself this as the carriage rushes on through the pitchy night, amidst increasing wind and rain. To what mysterious limbo will go the smelling-bottles, Dresden plates, traveling-clocks, fans, laces, brackets, Japanese monsters, Shakespeares, and church services that have been so lavishly poured in since the day when Mrs. Dormer officially announced that her daughter was to marry the rich Mr. Farintyre?

Costly food, costlier raiment go not, with intention, to the bottom of the sea, though hearts be shipwrecked. Who eventually will eat the London wedding-cake, and wear the Paris wedding-dress? Who will countermand the bouquets, the carriages, the guests, the officiating clerks, and make Mr. Dormer happy by telling him he may rest quiet among his tea-pots in Naples? Who will give the lady's-maid warning—for her mother and herself must, perforce, resume their old habits of nomadism, need an abigail less than ever, after the fruitless expenditure of the last few weeks—who will give the lofty Smart warning, and in what terms?

She wonders, without pain, almost as one might idly speculate on the concerns of some indifferent person, if she will live to see John Farintyre in the years to come: see him, perhaps, when she is an elderly faded woman, no particular hope distinguishing one of her colorless days from another, and he shall have grown into a senior partner, bald, prosperous, with wife and children, a seat in the House of Commons, an authoritative voice, and gout!

Should she die, happier contingency, now, when she has taken her last watch beside Roger Tryan, she knows the very spot on the cypress-covered slope of the Campo Santo where she would like to lie. A spot not so far from the violets of Keats's grave but that the Pyramid of Cestus, at a certain hour of the day, overshadows it. Would they bury her, here in Rome, at Tryan's side, or part her from him in death as in life? Part her from him, doubtless; recall with a sigh how, poor dear girl, she was never really strong; talk about thin shoes—imprudence—a chill result—

ing from the maddest ball-room freak—erect a marble falsehood, neatly, above her head, in some English cemetery, and forget her. Six months hence Mrs. Dormer will be wearing slighter mourning; other hands, obedient perhaps, to the impulse of some young and happy heart, shall woo soft delight from the strings of Stradivarius, and—

And the *vettura* pulls up short, midway along its course down a steep and narrow lane. Joyce is forced to remember that she is *living*, must drink her cup to the dregs ere vision so sweet as this of lying under violeted sod be indulged in.

“Via Nono, seventy-three,” repeats Longmore, looking skeptically forth into the darkness as he opens the carriage door. “Whether our guide has played us false, whether this be the Via Nono or not, I am afraid, Miss Dormer, you have no choice but to brave the weather. It was part of the bargain that we should keep the *vettura* for one course only, and that the driver should not wait a second. Let me get out, first—search, at least, for shelter.”

Shelter, however, is not forthcoming. In blackest obscurity, the rain beating fiercely in her face, Joyce finds herself once more on rough, wet pavement, young Longmore and the driver trying to outshout the wind (must not men be paid, must not men resent overcharge, though one at hand lie dying?) as they settle how many lire shall be paid for the half hour’s drive. With the departure of the *vettura* the position seems to grow forlorn. Joyce is familiar with all the main Roman thoroughfares, and, as her eyes gradually grow used to the darkness, she can distinguish one or two landmarks of the neighboring Monte Giordano. But how feel sure that this is the Via Nono? How make out poor Tryan’s lodging amidst the rows of towering, unlighted houses which stretch out in vague perspective on either side?

“Via Nono, seventy-three.” No lottery-ticket-holder, breathlessly waiting to hear *his* number called, could experience heart-beats more poignant than does Joyce as, clinging to Longmore’s arm, she deciphers number after number on the crumbling, weather-beaten lintels above the doors! At length, the girl’s limbs failing her for very weariness, further search all but given up in despair, “73,” roughly chalked upon a ground-floor shutter, catches her sight. The house to which this shutter belongs is a ruin-

ous, many-storied building, upon the first floor of which one solitary window gives sign of human presence. The rickety outer *portone* stands ajar. An oil-lamp, burning beneath a Madonna on the opposite side of the street, feebly illuminates the entrance. When the *portone* is pushed open, the balustrade of a staircase can be guessed at, rather than distinguished, through the gloom.

"Here we part, then," whispers Joyce, Hugh Longmore having given a muffled ring at the house-bell. "I am safe in shelter, and you—ah, Mr. Longmore," she breaks off with quick remorse, "it is the old story still. I have behaved selfishly throughout the whole of our acquaintance. I am selfish, thinking only of myself to the end."

"Thinking only of yourself, Miss Dormer?"

Their hands have met, exchange the pressure of a silent farewell. Hugh Longmore strains his eyes to catch a last impression of the face whose haunting fairness, during all these months, has been his paradise and his torment.

"Yes, thinking of my own trouble, forgetting that you were wet to the skin and would be stranded, without guide or conveyance, among these deserted Roman lanes. But for helping me to find the number you might have returned to your hotel in the carriage, might have been spared the misery of another soaking."

The water, of a truth, runs in streams down the young Oxonian's drenched evening suit.

"When one is wet, one is wet," he remarks laconically. "Fate seems to have decreed that whenever you and I, Miss Dormer, are thrown into each other's society we should come to grief—"

"In the matter of weather, not in other things," Joyce interrupts him, with emphasis.

Hugh Longmore dares not trust himself sufficiently to answer her.

"I, of course, have come to the last grief of all. Every hope of my life is over—only one frail plank still left to founder, and then—absolute shipwreck."

"Many a frail plank has ridden out storm and tempest before this."

Longmore's voice betrays him, although the tenor of his words is reassuring.

"Not such a storm as this," Joyce answers tremblingly. "You, however, need not be bracketed with me in mis-

fortune. When you go from Rome I hope all troublous thoughts will be left behind you, buried here."

"When I go from Rome I shall carry away—not hope," exclaims Longmore passionately; "but a higher ideal than I ever had! In the last two hours I have regained more than I had lost. It is not a time, I know," he adds, "to speak of personal feelings—of keenest regret, bitterest disappointment. I am a spectator at a drama that moves me utterly, but a spectator, only."

"And you will not be the worse—as time goes on, you will not feel less interest in your life, less pleasure in your work, for having known me? So much, before we part, I should like to hear you say."

Frankly the poor girl presses his hand, frankly upholds her white, agitated face to his. But Longmore misunderstands Joyce Dormer, suspects her of coquetry, no more.

The solution of the problem, the interpretation of a woman's heart, have, tardily, dawned upon him!

"I shall be better, richer, until I die, for having loved you," he whispers, his pent-up secret wrung from him in the moment's strong emotion. "Every past hour that I have spent with you has been pure gain, gold without a mixture of dross! And as for the future—"

In a moment Joyce has gone back to the remembrance of Tryan, the horror of her own overshadowing dread.

"Do not let us talk like this. There is no future for me," she exclaims wildly. "If a brighter day ever dawns for Roger Tryan I will write. Rest assured I shall keep my word this time! Then I will thank you as I can not do now for your generous help to both of us. Mr. Longmore—good-bye."

Even as she speaks the word, a mysterious little door opens in the further corner of the entrance yard. A minute later, a nondescript slippered figure, lamp in hand, has made its way through the darkness, and in the soft *patois* of the Roman peasant people, announces itself as the *por-tiere* of the establishment.

"An *Inglese*!" This is in answer to Joyce Dormer's flurried, barely intelligible questions. "Yes, an *Inglese moriente* lies—worse fortune to the house—on the first floor. Ahi, ahi. It is a case of bad fever, *lasci che yo le dica*. Best leave the *povero* to the saints and to the *Buona Sorella* who nurses him. Nay, then, if the *signorina* choose, she

shall have the sick man's door pointed out to her. Ahi, ahi. These Protestant *Inglese* mind neither death nor heaven."

For a second longer Joyce's ice-cold hand presses Longmore's, her breath lingers, as once it did, among the lonely mountains, in the placid summer moonlight, on his cheek. Then a girlish, black-clad figure flits across the court-yard's floor, the sound of a light footstep dies away, is lost among the echoes of the staircase. The vividest chapter of Hugh Longmore's life is closed with a clasp.

CHAPTER XVII.

DEAD VIOLETS.

A TRAGIC unornamented fact, brought abruptly face to face with one's own conscience. Refined reader, do you know the moral shock engendered by such a process?

Joyce Dormer, during her twenty-one years, has, by virtue of the artistic temperament, lived much; has thought, has felt more than the average of young women; has loved, has suffered. And still, thoughts, feelings, sufferings, have, perforce, been trivialized by a certain influence. Serious, persistent frivolity, sweet, smiling disbelief like Mrs. Dormer's, tend to lay young enthusiasm in the dust quite as effectually, I suspect, as did the orthodox method of preaching down a daughter's heart, in vogue, thirty years ago.

When the door of Tryan's sick-room opens, when the portress, invoking all calendared saints, collectively, has crossed herself, and fled down the stairs, Joyce Dormer stands alone. Alone, unpropped by chaperon or convention, in the presence of truth, the issues of life or of death marshaled in sternest array before her eyes. Alone with the man whose happiness pretty little feminine aspirations and caprices ruined long ago, and who, racked by fever and weakness, calls now upon the name of Nessie Pinto, now upon her own, in the plain, unanswerable sincerity of delirium.

In this moment Joyce Dormer becomes a woman, forsakes the Doll tribe with its low ambitions, its cold desires, its easy sliding scale of cheap moralities, for evermore.

The room where Tryan lies is bare and moldering. The

windows, in accordance with Roman ideas of nursing, are fast closed. Medicine bottles, mixed up with the remains of an Italian supper—*id est*, oil, fish-bones and garlic—stand on a table, not a couple of yards distant from the sick man's pillow.

In an opposite corner of the room, bolt upright, sits an aged sister of the Bon Secours. A rosary, half told, is slipping from between her thin brown fingers. Her head is supported by the wall, her mouth is open. The sister of the Bon Secours sleeps, audibly.

“*Dell' acqua! Datemi dell' acqua,*” moans poor Tryan, in hoarse, broken Italian. “Why, Pinto, I say, where's Nessie—where's your wife? Can't she give up Monte Carlo for one night? Send a servant, then—don't leave me to die of thirst alone. Water—one of you—for the love of Heaven—water!”

Hastily laying aside her hat and cloak, Joyce crosses to the bed and takes her place by Roger Tryan. A jug of water stands on a table close at hand. She pours some into a cup, and supporting the sick man's head with her arm—the arm that was to have been Roger's rightful pillow two years ago—raises it to his lips.

He drinks, in short, greedy gulps; then, as he is in the act of swallowing, falls back heavily. His staring, over-bright eyes meet Joyce's very full.

“Who are you—what are you doing here?” he cries. “Nessie, I say, Nessie Pinto, send this German girl away. She has come here to poison me, send her away! I want,” his voice changing almost to a moan, “I want to see Joyce Dormer before I die. Oh, I understand—you are afraid to let her come! Jealousy, this wretched jealousy to the last. My poor little darling—with her pure face—and her eyes. Shall I never again see her eyes, this side of the grave?”

“She is here, Roger; she is waiting for you to forgive her.”

“Don't you know that Kriloff has the deal? *Rien ne va plus. Le jeu est fait—rouge gagne, et couleur.* The same bad luck as ever—No good, you say, madame, in pulling up. Then double the stakes—follow out your system. As well be ruined in one night as take a year about it.”

He stops, and looks round him, wildly. Joyce shrinks

not for a moment. Her pitying clasp does but hold him closer.

“Whose arm is this?” he rambles on, presently. “Whose face is hanging over me here in this miserable place?—Take her away—quick! I won’t have the German woman near me. Mrs. Pinto, you have been my friend through thick and thin, truer—you are right in that—than a hundred Joyce Dormers.”

A shudder of pain runs through the slight frame that upholds him.

“But I loved her, fickle though she was—and now—that I am dying—you keep her from me. Give me water!” He cries this with piteous impatience, and clutching the bed-clothes between his pale hands. “For the sake of Heaven, water!”

Again Joyce lifts the cup to Roger Tryan’s lips, her arm supporting his head. Again his eyes rest, this time with something more of reasonable recognition in their gaze, upon her face.

“Are you the girl I used to go about with at Cowes?” he asks, catching such firm hold of her wrist that, for a second, Joyce Dormer’s courage well-nigh fails her. “Where is your husband? What are you doing, here, in my room?”

“I am Joyce,” she answers, bending over him tenderly. “I have no husband, Roger. I love no one in the world but you. You are very ill. You are away from all your friends, and I—have come here to your lodging to nurse you.”

At the sound of her voice Roger Tryan for a moment or two looks bewildered; the wildness in his eyes softens. Then, bursting into a loud, jarring laugh, he loosens his hold upon her.

“No husband! You will say next, no lover. A pretty story to tell me after all that is past and gone. Why, there was Sir Kenneth Grant—old enough to be my poor darling’s father, but approved by Mrs. Dormer for all that! And now there is this fellow with the big fortune. I saw them together on the Pincian, in the Borghese gardens, at the Sistine Chapel. What do they call him? Tell me quick—don’t torture me—the man out of the city—their marriage is fixed for Saturday—you know him as well as I do!”

Sick and trembling, Joyce brings her lips to speak John Farintyre's name.

"Farintyre, that's it! 'A fellow almost damned in a fair wife.' There they are—standing together in the crowd. Let the priests put out their tapers and chant their psalms. *Miserere—miserere*—such a marriage cries aloud for pity, both from God and man. Do you see her there, I say—Joyce Dormer, at Farintyre's side, smiling?"

"Joyce Dormer will never smile again in this world," says the girl, as he seems to pause for her answer.

"She does not know I am watching. She thinks me safe, a dying man, away there in Nice. Dead men tell no tales, my poor child, do they? Troublesome, you see, for a married woman to come across an old lover, an out-at-elbows spendthrift like Roger Tryan. And Joyce is prudent, there you show judgment, Mrs. Pinto, prudent—a heart of ice—"

"No, Roger! She loves you. We will put the past away, and hope for good days yet. Joyce Dormer loves you."

"Prudent, like her mother, knows the market value of things— Why, when the Frenchman had winged me, never to call, never to write me a single word— The quarrel was not about her," he breaks off confusedly; "Joyce Dormer's name shall not be mixed up in a paltry card dispute— See, your luck again, madame! *Tout va aux billets.. L'or va à la masse. Rien ne va plus.* Oh, heavens, stop it all—turn off this gas, and give me air. I suffocate."

Joyce Dormer crosses the room; without awakening the fast-slumbering nurse, she opens a chink of window, then softly gets back to her place beside Tryan's pillow.

"That is right," moans the poor fellow, as a breath of fresher air crosses his face. "We are better off here, Joyce, among the orange-trees than hanging over that wretched green cloth, are we not? *Dix-huit coups de tiers et tout, et une série de cinq.* If your wife goes on like this, Pinto, we shall be ruined, both of us. No man's purse would last out such play. Make her wait for a new dealer—or ask some one else to stake. Ask Joyce Dormer? No, I say, no. She shall never put down a napoleon. It is not a place for the girl. What brought her to Monte Carlo at all—at Zecca's side, too! A thousand pardons, Monsieur

le Comte, but—well, then, monsieur, if your friend insists on taking things seriously, it was meant as a hint, an affront if you like the word better, and I'll abide the consequences— Wounded? Oh, a scratch, a flesh wound, only. Bid Gervais see me home— Keep the thing out of the papers if you can, and tell the Frenchman to run. I've done a good bit of work, Pinto, though you would not stand by me—cleared Monte Carlo of that scoundrel."

So, incoherently, Tryan's mind wanders; recollections of light and darkness, of orange-scented gardens and croupiers' cries, of Joyce Dormer and of his own quarrel with Zecca, poured forth together in loud and ever-heightening delirium. At length, worn out, he falls into a broken, troubled sleep, and Joyce is free to move, faint of spirit, yet upheld by the feeling of infinite bodily strength that the weakest of us, in such dread hours, have experienced.

Quitting her place beside the bed, she applies herself to the needed task of making the sick-room neat. The girl has an inborn faculty for nursing; a gift, I have remarked, not unfrequent in women who are also born artists. Her step and her touch are quiet, her dress is unrustling, her sense of hearing keen, her nerve steady. She bears away the sister's garlic-haunted supper-dishes into an adjoining chamber, and skillfully adjusts the opening of windows in such a fashion that air, without draught, shall vitalize the patient's oxygen-craving blood. Then, noiselessly and swift, she sets herself to arranging the chaos of minor disorder that a week's Italian sick-nursing has sufficed to bring about—medicine vials, glasses, spoons, *carafes*, crowded in unlovely array upon the time-blackened ledge that serves for mantel-shelf, cupboard, and dressing-table above the fire-place.

In doing this, it chances that Joyce comes across a small heap of Roger Tryan's personal belongings, laid away, doubtless, by the honest sister on her first arrival in the lodging. His watch and chain are here, together with the locket that once held a bit of his betrothed's hair, a pair of sleeve-links—his real or playfully feigned attachment to which used many a time to arouse Joyce's jealousy—a signet-ring, a bunch of long-dead violets.

Dare she guess as to the color of the hair that lies inclosed, now, within that locket? Dare she wonder of whom these violets are a remembrance?

Alas, what matters it! So answers her chill and sinking heart. Of what account are falsehood or fidelity to one who nears the goal whither Tryan is hastening, who treads the dark road where no human love can bear us company, no human coldness harm us more!

Dead violets. With an impulse of repentant tenderness, Joyce lifts them to her mouth. She cares not for whose sake Tryan first valued them. Enough, that they have been his! With muffled tread she moves a step or two closer to the night-lamp, and examines the little bunch of dried stalks and sapless petals more nearly.

They are the violets she dropped on the terrace at Monte Carlo; are tied together *by a shred of crimson filoselle*.

Roger Tryan's sleep lasts for the best part of an hour. When he awakens it is with somewhat quieted nerves, with a look of freshened consciousness on his features.

"Water, give me water!" Does a fever patient ever wake with any other cry? "*Dell' acqua, buona Sorelli, datemi dell' acqua.*"

The *buona Sorella* sleeps, professionally calm, through everything. But Joyce, on the instant, is at his pillow; she raises Roger's head; with gentle strength supporting his weight, she gives him water to drink as before. He looks at her, when she has laid him back on his pillow, with a face, sunken though it be, that is like the beloved face she remembers, with eyes no longer unknowing.

"I dreamed that you were here, Joyce. Your mother and Mr. Farintyre could not keep you away, my dear, could they?"

"No one could have kept me away," she falters. "I heard first of your illness at a ball, to-night, from Hugh Longmore. In a moment I felt that I might be of help to you, and I came."

"You did not come very quick in Nice after my misadventure with the Frenchman."

"I never knew of your danger. The whole story was cruelly hidden from me. Do you think," she cries, "after what was said between us that night at Monte Carlo, after I had asked you to call on my mother next day, that I should break faith with you again?"

"It was a near thing—did Longmore tell you? Monsieur Zecca's bullet went considerably nearer one's lungs than

the surgeons liked. However, we won't talk of past misfortune now. Things are looking up for me," a wan smile breaking over his face, as he speaks, "for I have got you! How long are you going to stay with me, Joyce?"

"As long as you will have me," she answers; then sinks upon her knees at his side. "I will never leave you more, dear Roger, unless you wish it."

Roger stretches out his arm around her shoulder, drawing her toward him, with such poor strength as he still possesses.

"Of course. I know what that means. Farintyre generously spares you for a little time because I am going to die. I overhear more than they think—the end approaches. The old English doctor who visits me said as much to-day to the *Sorella*."

A cry of exceeding bitterness breaks from Joyce Dormer's convulsed lips.

"Oh, my dear, live for me! I have loved you always—yes, when the world, when you, Roger, must have thought me falsest. Only I was a coward, I did not dare stand up against Lady Joan and against my mother. But I have loved you always. I have never forgotten you for an hour."

"And you don't mean to marry Farintyre? Mrs. Dormer will consent, after all, to your accepting poverty? Nay, we will leave doubtful subjects alone. We will talk only of ourselves. Do you remember the first night I saw you, Miss Dormer, at the opera? Minnie Hauk was playing 'Carmen.' The bull-fighter had just sung his song. And I looked round from my stall, and saw your yellow locks close above me in one of the boxes."

"And at the end of the act you came in with Mr. Armitage to be introduced to us. You did not leave our box for the remainder of the evening, Roger."

"And as I took you to the carriage you gave me a list of your coming balls, you promised me dances for them all. Well, well, 'tis over now, operas, balls, everything—but the time that followed was the best time of my life."

"And of mine," adds Joyce humbly. "I remember each of those dances as if it had taken place yesterday. I keep my programmes still. I read your name, written on them from end to end."

“You gave me dances, but I had plenty of rivals, all the same.”

How cheerfully they talk—cheerfully, though with every stroke of the clock, Roger Tryan’s strength ebbs, and Joyce’s miserable heart comes nigher to breaking.

“You took care I should not be too sure of my fate until the hour came. Do you remember that hour, Joyce?”

“Remember!”

And at the thought a glow of warm and passionate life overcomes the pallor of Joyce Dormer’s face.

“It was in Richmond Park. We were taking an after-dinner walk, and had the misfortune, somehow, to lose Mrs. Dormer and the others! You were bent, you said, on finding white fox-gloves that evening, so we were forced to go deep away among the woods. The sun was setting, and—did I, or did I not, really make you a declaration, Joyce?”

“You always said not,” she answers, resting her soft hand on his forehead. “And so, Roger, as we certainly were engaged when we drove back to town, I suppose the declaration must have come from me.”

“My poor little sweetheart! It was a bad evening’s work for you, any way. You might have married some richer fellow even than Farintyre but for that Richmond dinner.”

“Thank God I have married no one,” is Joyce’s firm answer. “Thank God I am free to kneel at your side, to hold your hand, as I do now.”

“Free to watch by me till death us do part,” says Roger, but with his utterance once more growing indistinct. “There is something like that in the marriage service, is there not?”

“Till death us do part.”

Joyce Dormer’s lips can frame no answer save the husky repetition of his words.

“Well, then, although we have had no priest’s blessing, you will stay with me—until all this dream is over. For I *am* dreaming.” And he shrinks from her, the restless fire of delirium again lighting up his eyes. “*Faites votre jeu. Messieurs, le jeu est fait. Rien ne va plus!* Why is it so dark? Are they turning off the gas already? It was not dark like this at Monte Carlo.”

“You are in Rome, quietly alone with me, Roger. Let us never speak or think of Monte Carlo more.”

“There’s Nessie Pinto at the foot of the bed, in black—

a small bit of hypocrisy, madame, that black gown of yours—Nessie Pinto and her husband. What! You have brought my check-book, Pinto, all the way to Rome? You have not forgotten that, though you forgot to stand by me the other day. You want a trifling loan—the old story—my signature, merely, for another hundred? Then make your wife take an oath—Nessie's oaths—to give up play. *Rouge gagne et couleur*. Lost, again. Don't you see the Russian croupier dealing? When did you ever have luck in one of Kriloff's deals?"

So, through the lagging night hours, Tryan rambles darkly on. At length, just when the crystal-clear light of Roman dawn is breaking, sleeps falls upon him. After a brief interval he opens his eyes, and, very quietly, calls Joyce by name.

"I am here," she answers, bending over him instantly.

"Are you suffering? Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Kiss me, my poor little girl. Let me feel your lips once again this side of the grave."

And Joyce obeys him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

STRADIVARIUS.

EASTER, this year, has fallen unusually late. The southern summer draws on with rapid, flower-strewn steps. By each express that leaves the Eternal City the English-speaking Roman colony disperses to the winds.

The month of May is the fairest, possibly the wholesomest, season of the Roman calendar. We Britons must fly north or south, nevertheless. Did not somebody, long ago, decree that English persons of fashion must *never* spend their Mays in Rome? When nightingales sing and roses blow, and the Romans begin to eat delicious little ices and take *siestas* in the shade, is it not imperative upon every unit in the great army of Nobodies to pack up his portmanteau, pay his hotel bill, and fly?

Out of the crowd of persons who elbowed each other during the ceremonies of the Holy Week, scarce half a dozen, by the end of another fortnight, remain. John Farintyre, with brand-new valet, brand-new traveling-gear, and a great number of bracelets and necklaces upon his hands,

started for London on the morrow of the Orsini ball. A not unauthentic whisper has floated Romeward, that bracelets, necklaces and Mr. John Farintyre himself, are already offered to the lawful acceptance of Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity. Hugh Longmore is keeping his last term in Oxford. Little Mrs. Dormer, with implacable resignation, has offered herself up to the world's view—a martyr! Little Mrs. Dormer, after some years' delay on the road, has at length overtaken her husband and his tea-pots at Naples.

“My child's behavior under late trying circumstances was simply magnificent.” This she tells her Naples friends, a tear, pellucid as truth, glistening on her eyelash. “Joyce is a born nurse, at the call of pity would sacrifice even her own nearest interests. Under brighter circumstances Mr. Tryan's amiable qualities had endeared him to us. In the dark hour, when fair-weather friends all fled, my daughter nobly risked her life to tend him. Joyce's conduct has been magnificent. I, alas! have felt my heart torn asunder by conflicting duties. Personal fear one, of course, has none. A nervous invalid like my dear Mr. Dormer must be guarded from the possibility of contagion. And so, for awhile, her nursing cares fortunately brought to an end by the patient's convalescence, Joyce must resign herself to lingering on in Rome in quarantine.”

Will you visit her in this “quarantine,” reader, see in what haven Joyce Dormer's overwrought heart and brain have found rest?

You must ascend a narrow road close beside the Arch of Titus if you would do so, ring at a convent door above which *BONUM EST NOS HIC ESSE* is graven in moldering capitals, and deliver your message, show your credentials to a somber-robed, cheerful-faced portress, one of the lay members of the sisterhood, who will appear behind the barred *grille* in answer to your ring.

Here, among a community of the Little Sisters of the Poor, on a site which in Rome of old was the garden of Adonis, Joyce Dormer has sought and found refuge. In her first outburst of passionate repentance, of just indignation, all that the girl could realize was—that she had been deceived; that Roger Tryan, helpless, forsaken, needed her succor! On the night of the Orsini ball she went to his

sick pillow as a daughter would go to a dying father, a sister to a brother. She took her place, day and night, beside the nurses, quitted him not in his extremest need, ministered to him, divinely patient, throughout his slow, oftentimes doubtful, return to convalescence.

Only when convalescence had fairly set in, on a certain morning when the doctor, drawing her aside, remarked triumphantly that their patient was returning to *life*, did Joyce realize what thing it was that she had done. Over shattered doll moralities she mourned not. But Roger himself— Agony lay in the thought that her imprudence might lower her in his sight, for whom she would have counted the world and the world's opinion well lost. And in a paroxysm of new-born shame, with burning cheek and stammering tongue, she besought the kindly English doctor to be her guide. Mrs. Dormer, drawn, as we have seen, by the cords of wifely duty, was at this very moment preparing to start for Naples. Lawful protector in Rome, Joyce, on her mother's departure, would have none. And yet to Rome, as long as Roger remained there an invalid, she found herself bound.

“ Mr. Tryan might have a relapse. It was well for her to be at hand in case the nurses of the Bon Secours should need her help. But she would like to go away—to-day—this morning—from Mr. Tryan's lodging. Her strength was shaken a little, perhaps, through loss of sleep. Or it might be that this early summer weather tired one's northern nerves. It would be good for her to move to a different part of Rome; good to rest. If Dr. Byrne could only advise her as to a fitting resting-place?”

As the poor girl asked this, faltering, blushing, it scarcely needed forty years' professional experience to arrive at a diagnosis of her case. Gravely resting his fingers on Joyce's wrist, the good old doctor pronounced a change of air to be an instant necessity; two hours later—a plaintively written consent wrung, meanwhile, from Mrs. Dormer—drove with her himself to the door of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Sisters in very truth, gentle souls, whom no Roman heats can drive from their cloisters and their prayers; simple women, ready ever to offer sanctuary to the lonely or the sorrow-stricken, to the poor of spirit as to the poor of purse!

From that day on, Joyce Dormer's health of mind has

made steady progress. Exactly the profound quiet that we need after seasons of large joy or grief the sleepy daily round of this convent life has yielded her. She is as truly making a "retreat" as though orthodox confessor listened to her searchings of conscience, and saintly director guided her hours.

How if she had grown enamored in earnest of gray convent walls, if, taking example by the sisters, she had weaned herself from all old desire of mundane achievement? What chance had there been for a soul like hers in an existence as void of human ambition as of human love?

Resting within the *pergola*—a rose-embroidered, orange-shaded pathway of the convent garden—Joyce ponders closely over these questions, one dreamy noontide. A cloistered life, she bethinks her, could not be such a very bad lot, here in Rome, with the memories, the poetry, of all the ages around, a tapestry of sun-kissed flowers clothing the walls of one's prison-house, and the ever-young Italian sky above. Not a bad kind of moral suicide, if no voice in far-away England called to one, if no vacant chair, beside an English hearth, were the price of one's euthanasia!

Even as she muses thus, her thoughts become dramatized, unconsciously. A "Song without Words" is ready to break from Joyce's heart. In fancy she can see some pallid English sister, standing amidst the mingled orange blooms and cypress shades of the convent garden. A rosary is between the sister's thin hands, a mechanical prayer on her rigid lips, and in her breast—yearnings for warm household love that she shall never taste, of duties, sweet, trebly sweet in their daily commonness, which she has forfeited forever.

If Stradivarius were only at hand, how naturally the pathetic story would set itself to music! Joyce rises from her seat. Wistfully gazing across strong walls and iron-barred gates, she thinks of her violin lying disused, in its case, in Roger Tryan's lodging. In imagination her fingers know the delightful familiar sensation of polished bow and vibrating strings. She hears Roger's voice while, half tenderly, half jesting, as in the days long dead, he criticises her improvisation. As she stands thus, her cheeks a little pale, her eyes suffused under the influence of thought that bids fair to become emotion, a solid footstep crunches along the path that leads from the convent build-

ings to the *pergola*, a black-robed figure approaches—no pining, passionate Heloise, but good, thirteen-stone Monica, the portress, contentment and good cheer writ large on every feature of her handsome old Roman face.

Another few seconds, and a slip of folded paper is in Joyce's hand.

"Doctor Byrne and a friend would be glad of ten minutes' conversation with Miss Dormer in the convent parlor."

Her past fortnight among the Little Sisters has been one of unalloyed good to Joyce; a calm breathing-space upon which, from out the wear and tear of fuller-colored life, it may well be that she shall look back, hereafter, with a feeling of regret. None the less does she obey Dr. Byrne's summons with over-ready steps, with a flush of most mundane tell-tale expectation on her face. Through dim orange-scented *pergola*, through noontide blazing sun, she flies to the quadrangle, a marble-paved space, where at this moment the sisters, two and two, pace slowly under shadow of the cloisters. She traverses the long cool convent passages; she reaches the threshold of the parlor. Then, pausing for a second to get back her breath, Joyce pushes back the half-opened door, hastily, and discovers Roger Tryan, alone.

"I—I beg your pardon—I thought Doctor Byrne was here."

So she falters, growing guiltily red, and stopping short on the entrance.

"Doctor Byrne has gone on to visit a patient in the next street," says Roger, coming forward to meet her. "He has promised me ten minutes' grace—ten minutes, Miss Dormer, to say all that has still to be said between you and me! Why have you not been to see me for so long?"

Roger has, by this time, shut the door; and Joyce makes her escape into the remotest window of the room, an iron-barred window, festooned by trailing vine branches, and with an outlook through vistas of Judas-trees in bloom, toward a delicately purple sweep of Alban hills.

Garden and hills and blossoming trees are at rest. The whole world, it would appear, save one caged canary singing far away in the refectory, is purposely silent. The whitewashed walls seem prepared to listen. A row of water-color sisters send down cold glances of admonition

from their black bead frames overhead. The motionless repose of Southern midday is upon all things.

Joyce Dormer's color varies; her heart throbs loud and fast.

"I knew you were making good progress, Mr. Tryan. If there was any relapse Doctor Byrne and the *buona Sorella* promised to send for me. That was a settled thing when I left your lodging."

"How long is it since you left—months, years? I used to think being ill was slow work," says the poor fellow, whose face still wears the pinched and sunken look of recent fever. "But I have learned, since you gave me up, that there can be one thing in a man's life slower still—convalescence."

"Gave you up! You gave me up after the best of all fashions, Mr. Tryan—by recovering. I stayed as long as the doctor ordered, as long as it was possible you could want me."

"You think so. And suppose I had wanted you to stay forever?"

The question is a crucial one. Joyce Dormer buries her face amidst the tangle of warm leaves that frames the window.

"Are not the sisters fortunate in their garden? Were such delicious roses ever seen?" she remarks irrelevantly. "And look at the deep shade of our *pergola*. I don't for my part see, with such a garden as this, why one could not remain in Rome right through the summer."

"And be buried under the cypress, yonder, with the first autumn rains. I perceive, Miss Dormer," says Tryan, "that the Little Sisters of the Poor are getting hold of you. You are beginning to hanker after a convent life. Doctor Byrne hinted at such a likelihood as we drove along. The sisters are bent on making an English convert."

"The kind, simple sisters! I am afraid they know too well that I am of the world, worldly, to attempt my conversion."

"And you have no leaning toward the embroidering of altar laces, the trimming of saints' lamps—no intention of spending the remainder of your days within four well-barred walls?"

Mr. Tryan is standing at the distance of about one foot and a half from Joyce as he asks this question. Ere she

answers, she lifts her blue eyes to his face; they peruse it tenderly, not without a secret dread.

“You do not return to strength as quickly as you ought, Roger. The hair is gone from your temples. Your cheeks are hollowed. Your whole face has that terrible gray shade of illness about it still.”

“And you, Miss Dormer,” he answers, “have got back your best looks. Your cheeks never bloomed so sweetly before, I think. Evidently, you are not wasting away. The Little Sisters of the Poor do not starve you.”

His tone is jesting. Joyce turns from him with a quick movement of disappointment.

“I do not pretend to waste away. Why should I? Have I not everything in the world,” her lip quivers, “to make me happy?”

“And you are going to remain in Rome, among cypress shades, and saints’ pictures, and malaria, for the summer?”

“Why do you ask?”

“Out of idle curiosity. Under Doctor Byrnes’s orders I have decided to go north next week.”

A flush like day-dawn stains Joyce Dormer’s face from chin to temple, then leaves it pale.

“Doctor Byrne has ordered you to the north—well, Mr. Tryan, I am glad.”

“You are frank, at least, Miss Dormer!”

“Glad for your own sake. You have nothing in Rome to regret.

“That is true,” Roger Tryan answers cheerfully. “I shall leave nothing behind me in Rome, I *hope*, worth regretting. By the bye, Miss Dormer, instruct me as to what I am to do with your Stradivarius? Such a thing as profane music was of course never heard, since Saint Cecilia’s days, in a convent. Shall I keep your violin until I can give it back to you in a fitter place and season?”

At this question, at the coolness of voice with which the question is asked, Joyce Dormer’s spirit sinks to zero.

“Stradivarius will be more wanted by me than ever,” she answers, with a trembling attempt at lightness. “I have not told you about my ambitious plans for the future—indeed, I was uncertain myself if they could be carried out until I got a written approval from poor mamma. A Naples letter arrived, two days ago, however, and—”

“Bad news is coming!” interrupts Roger Tryan. “If my name was mentioned in the Naples letter I prepare for the worst.”

“Do not be afraid, Mr. Tryan. The letter is full of quite commonplace business. My mother has gone through so much trouble about me,” adds Joyce penitentially, “that I had scarce courage at first to break open the seal. Happily, everything is settled. I have her consent and my father’s also to my wishes.”

“Which are—?”

“To study violin-playing for three years at the Stuttgart Conservatorium, not as an amateur, but professionally.”

Upon hearing this news Roger Tryan, for a little space, stands mute. Then he puts his hand to his breast and draws forth a bunch of violets, pale of hue, scentless, as violets must be upon whose petals a Roman May sun has shone.

“Do you remember the violets you dropped on a certain terrace at Monte Carlo, just before Mrs. Dormer and the poet overtook us? I kept them—have you forgotten?—promising to give you some fresher ones next day. But next day, to me, was blank.”

Joyce shudders, although Tryan’s arm by this time holds her close.

“And now, here in Rome, I have been held prisoner by my illness. However, I have brought you your violets, at last—poor ones, for the violet season is over. What thanks do you give me?”

“I would to Heaven I had never gone to Monte Carlo,” cries Joyce passionately, and, taking the violets, she lifts them to her lips. “That foolish fancy has been the cause of all your troubles.”

“If you had not gone to Monte Carlo I might be losing money there still—supposing that, by this time, I had a napoleon left to lose! If you had not gone to Monte Carlo you might have married Mr. Farintyre weeks ago,” says Tryan, “in which case you may be sure I should have brought you no violets, faded or otherwise. Joyce, my dear,” he resumes after a pause, the water-color sisters looking sterner and sterner, the canary in the refectory singing his loudest—is it fancy on Joyce’s part that his song takes the minor key with the superfluous second of “Carmen!”—“I don’t approve of this Stuttgart plan; I

am wholly against violin-playing as a profession for young women of your age."

"But by the time I had finished with Stuttgart I should be in my five-and-twentieth year," says Joyce, vainly endeavoring to steady her voice. "I am of age now, old enough, as poor mamma says, to know my own mind and choose for myself—"

"Does Mrs. Dormer say that?" exclaims Roger Tryan. "Well, then, I second her. I say choose! Joyce," he pleads in a low and eager whisper, "are you going to turn from me for the sake of crotchets and semiquavers, and gaining yourself a famous name in art? Your nursing saved my life. Make the life you saved worth living—marry me."

Through yonder break amidst the cypress gleams a stretch of the Coliseum's crumbling, grass-grown arches. Nearer at hand lies the Via Sacra, the road along which Roman legions once poured forth to victory, where Cæsar walked abroad in purple, where Horace loitered, where Corinne and Oswald loved! And overhead is the sky of Italian summer, and birds' voices trill softly to each other amidst the convent trees, and in a girl's heart are love and hope and happiness, as fresh as though Rome was in its prime.

"Poverty is a grim thing to accept when one comes to the point," says Roger Tryan, as he watches the shifting hues of her face. "Still, I am not so absolutely ruined, so hopelessly an idler, but that we may look for bread and cheese, even yet."

"And there will be Stradivarius," adds Joyce presently. "In the old days you used to joke about my courtesying round for half-pence, in a spangled dress, at fairs. We must take life in earnest now. Let the future bring what it will—yes, Roger, and although I give up Stuttgart, I shall never be able to give up crotchets and semiquavers—there will be Stradivarius."

THE END.

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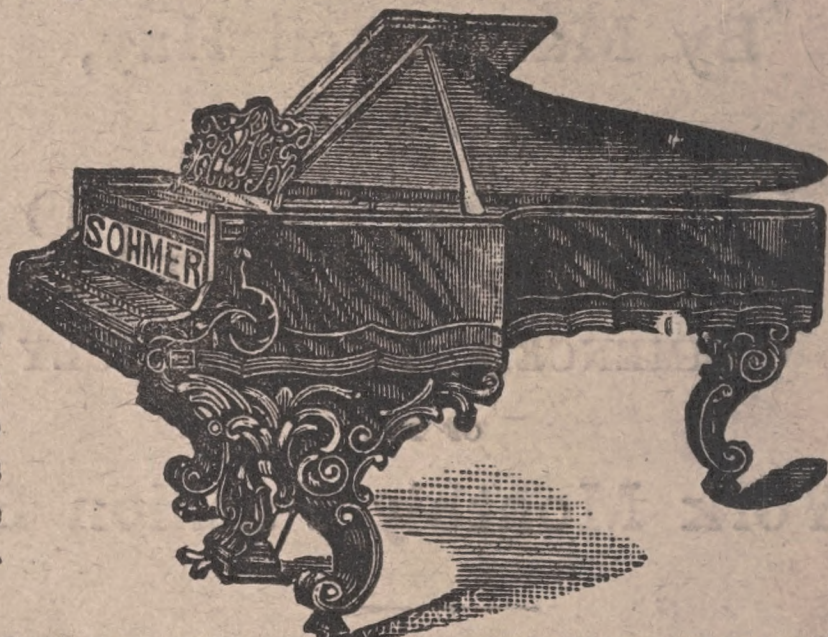
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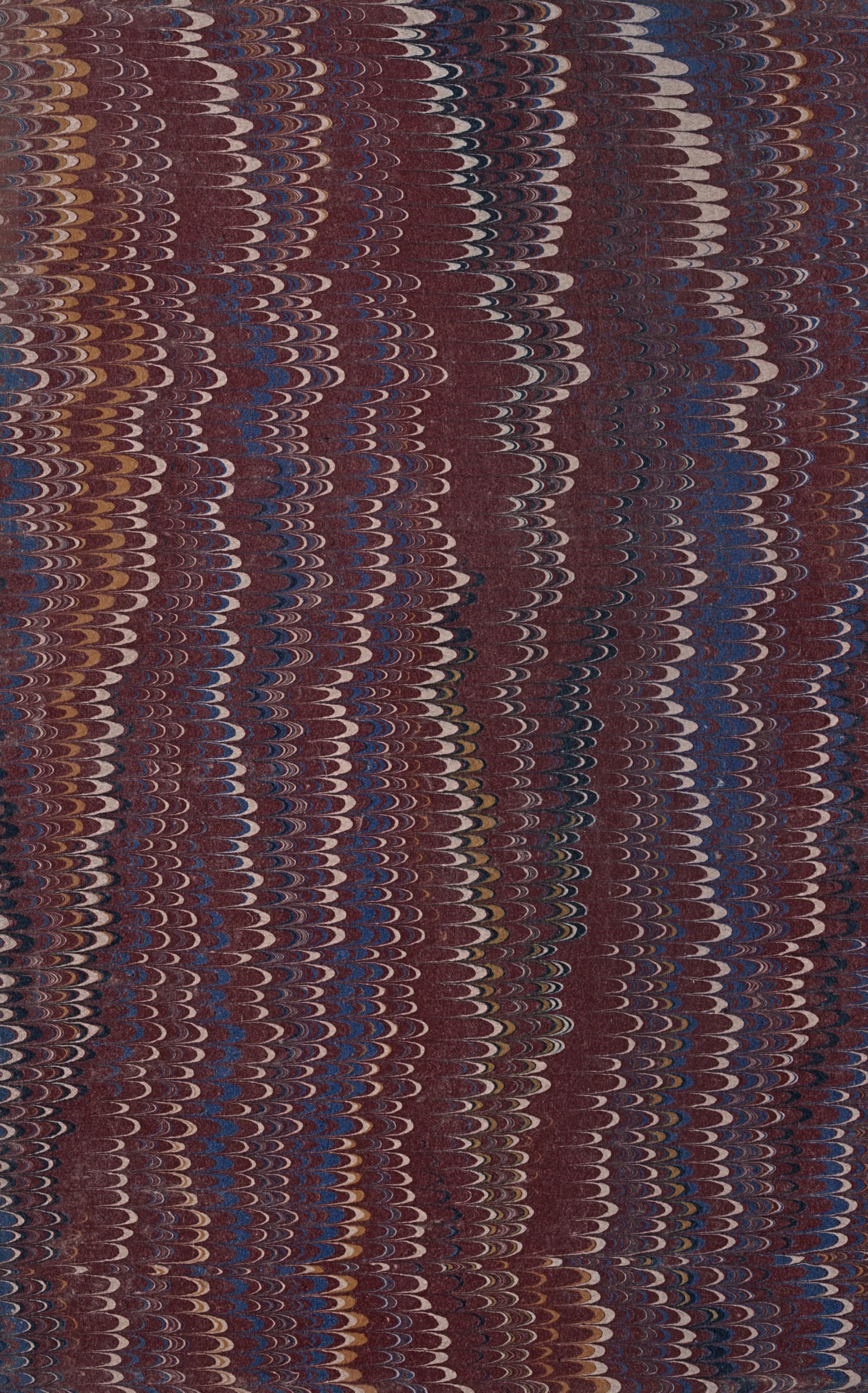
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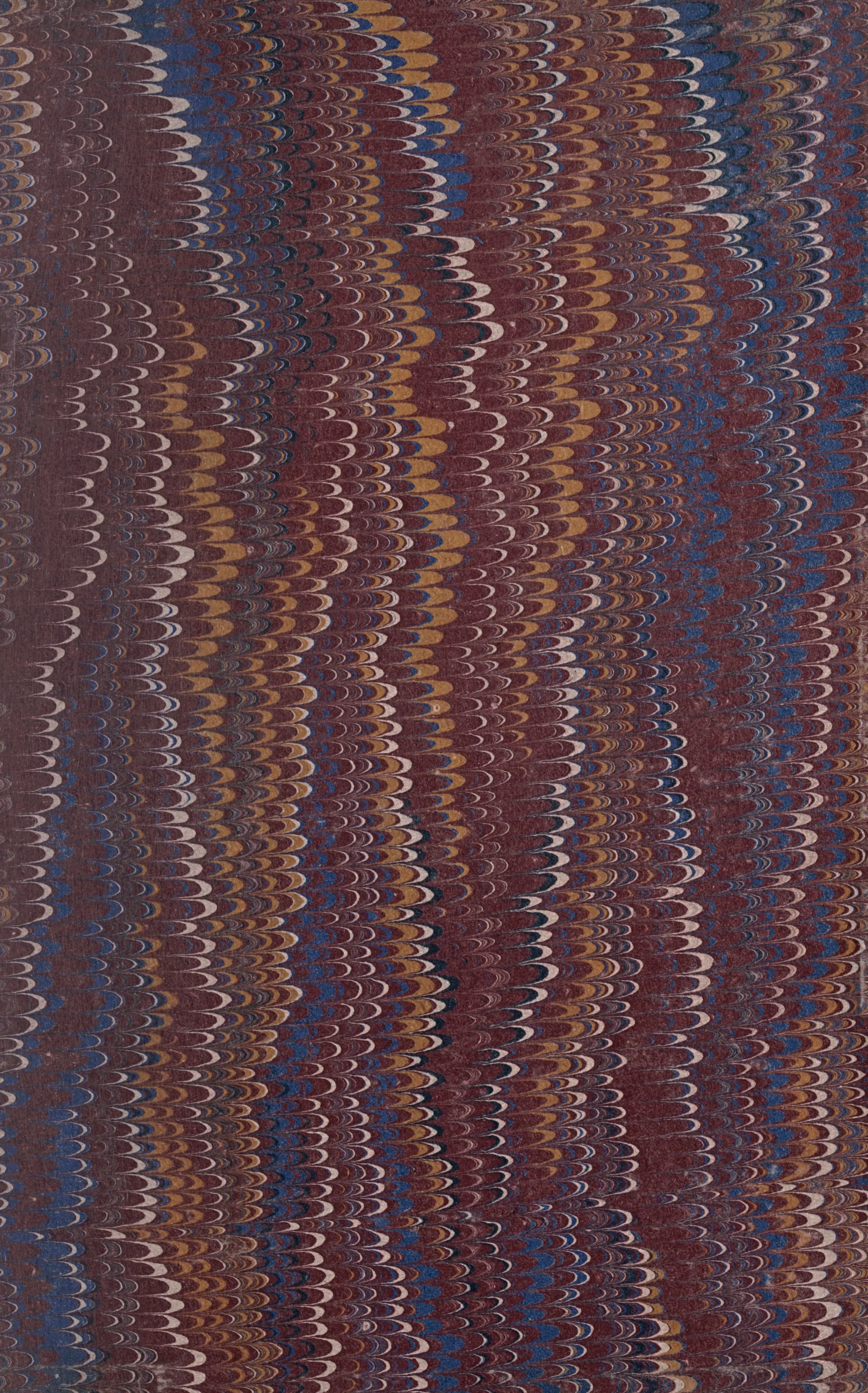
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